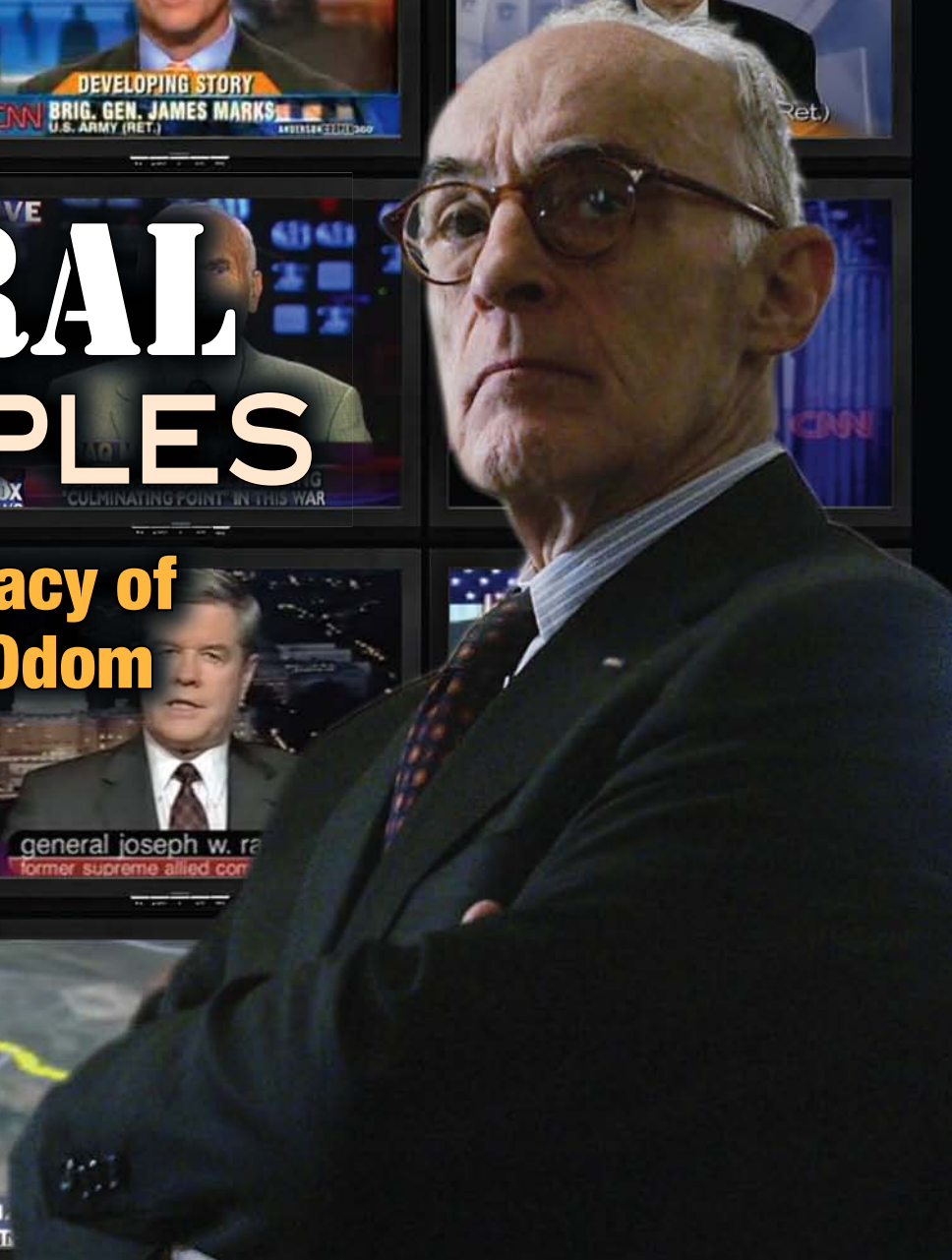
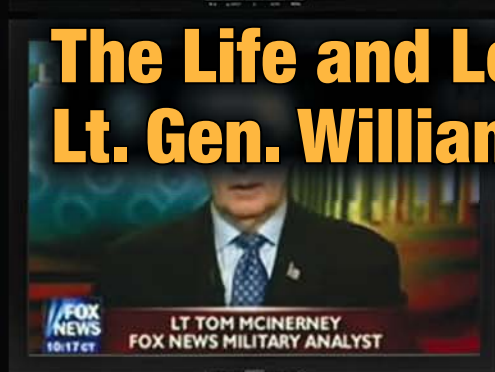


SEPTEMBER 8, 2008

The American Conservative



The must-have guide to the hidden reality be- hind the election-year Middle East policy debate.

"... essential reading for anyone wanting to understand or participate in the 2008 election-year debate over the war in Iraq and the crisis with Iran."

—David MacMichael, Ph.D., former analyst
and Estimates Officer, CIA Nat'l. Intelligence Council

"Sniegoski is among the most dogged researchers who have tried to light the centrality of Israel's security to the foreign-policy worldview of the neoconservatives."

—Jim Lobe, Washington Bureau Chief, *IPS News*

"... helps us understand the shifting pretexts for war and more war, and also the deeper motives and strategy . . ."

—Robert Hickson, Ph.D.,
former Prof., U.S. Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs,
and Joint Military Intelligence College, Washington, D.C.

"The author makes a meticulously documented, persuasive case."

—S. M. Ghazanfar, Ph.D., Prof. emeritus and
former Coordinator, Inat'l. Studies Program, University of Idaho

"... leaves no stone unturned in exposing the Israeli-neocon alliance and its catastrophic consequences in the Middle East."

—Jonathan Cook,
author of *Israel and the Clash of Civilisations*

"... [this] important study reminds us that the neo-cons have served America's interests badly."

—Dr. Alfred de Zayas, Geneva School of Diplomacy; former
senior official, Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

"Telling the truth in America today is more professionally risky than ever before, but Sniegoski couldn't care less . . . utterly absorbing."

—Thomas Woods, Ph.D., *New York Times* bestselling
author of *The Politically Incorrect Guide to American History*

"... the bible on the neoconservatives . . . a must read for anyone horrified by the disastrous course they have set for U.S. policy."

—Kathy and Bill Christison, former CIA officials

"For nearly half a century, adventurism in the Middle East has trumped a constitutional foreign policy. Sniegoski's book helps explain why."

—Lt.Col. Karen Kwiatkowski, USAF (ret.), Ph.D.

"The timing could not be better. The only aspect of U.S. Middle East policy not in controversy is that no one knows what to do; Sniegoski's book may help the debate break through this barrier."

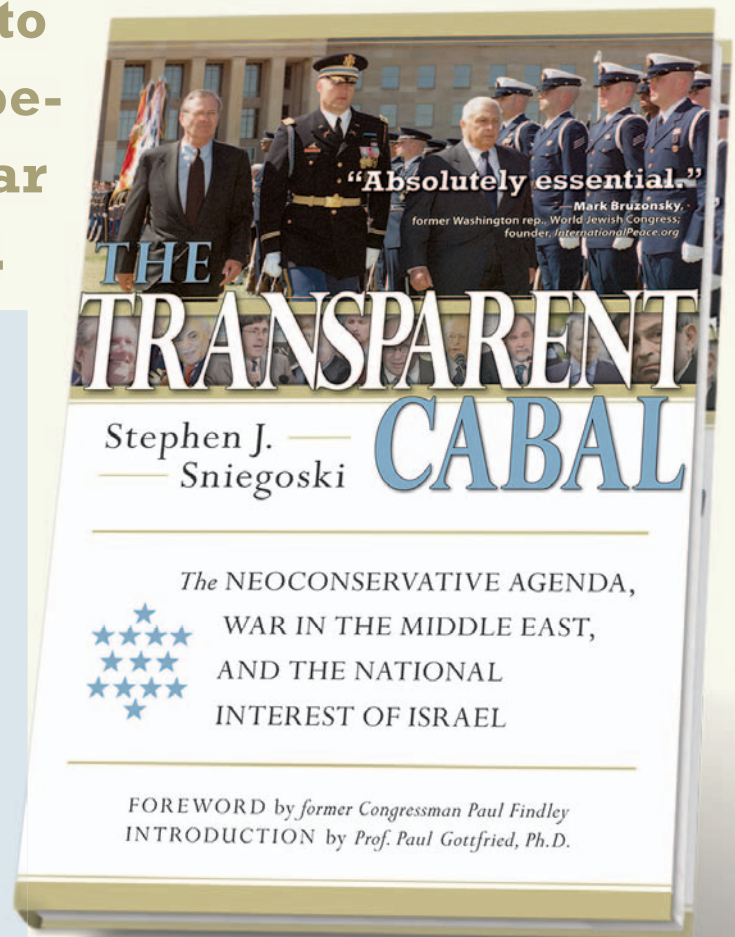
—Joseph Douglass, Ph.D.

"Sniegoski is a thorough researcher with a capacity for independent thought and the courage to advance and defend his analyses."

—Wayne Cole, Ph.D., Prof. Emeritus of History, University of Maryland

"... a fine primer for American and European students who wish to decipher the motives of U.S. foreign policy at the beginning of the Third Millennium . . . The author clearly makes a distinction between Jews at large and American neocons, who inadvertently risk harming the image of all Jews . . . A must read."

—Tomislav Sunic, Ph.D.,
former Croat diplomat; author of
Homo Americanus: Child of the Postmodern Age



\$27.95 | ISBN 978-1-932528-17-6

hardback | xviii, 445 pp | 6"x9" | notes & index

A fast-paced, impeccably documented book, *Transparent Cabal* provides the key to understanding "neoconservatism," its meaning, and its influence upon U.S. Middle East policy. It is also an essential guide—for concerned Americans and for people everywhere—to appreciating the concerns, aims, and pressure that the next U.S. President will face, as presented by a faction of neoconservatives in key foreign-policy circles.

Surveying their statements, writings, and policy papers, alongside that of Israeli defense strategists from Israel's far-right Likud, Sniegoski illuminates, in 19 compact, persuasive chapters, the roots and aims of the neoconservative Middle East policy. His conclusion is compelling and provocative: neoconservative policy for the Middle East is premised upon the perceived need to defend Israel from its potential enemies, and influential neoconservatives see American national interest in just those terms.

Whether this is right or wrong as U.S. policy, Sniegoski admits, is for the American people to answer. But first they have to know what the question is. If American policy is not about the promotion of democracy or the defense of national interests, but rather about something else, it must be discussed and debated among those called upon to give blood and treasure in its pursuit—so that it can then be made the subject of a real, educated vote this coming November.

The Transparent Cabal is the hopeful start of that discussion and debate.

VISIT YOUR LOCAL BOOKSTORE OR ONLINE BOOK RETAILER ~ AMAZON.COM, BN.COM, BORDERS.COM, ETC. ~ OR CALL INDEPENDENT PUBLISHERS GROUP AT 1-800-888-4741

ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

COLUMNS

10 Patrick J. Buchanan: Saakashvili's Man in Washington

17 Daniel Larison: New Evangelicals Behave Like Old

35 Stuart Reid: In Praise of St. Dorothy

NEWS & VIEWS

4 Fourteen Days: Another Reason to Vote Conley; Things to Do in Denver When You're Dead; Closing Ceremonies for the West

9 Deep Background: Washington's Men in Georgia

ARTICLES

11 Daniel Koffler: Let's remember World War I before launching World War V.

25 Eric S. Margolis: Who will succeed Musharraf as U.S. satrap in Pakistan?

26 Brendan O'Neill: Tibet, the Theocracy Liberals Like

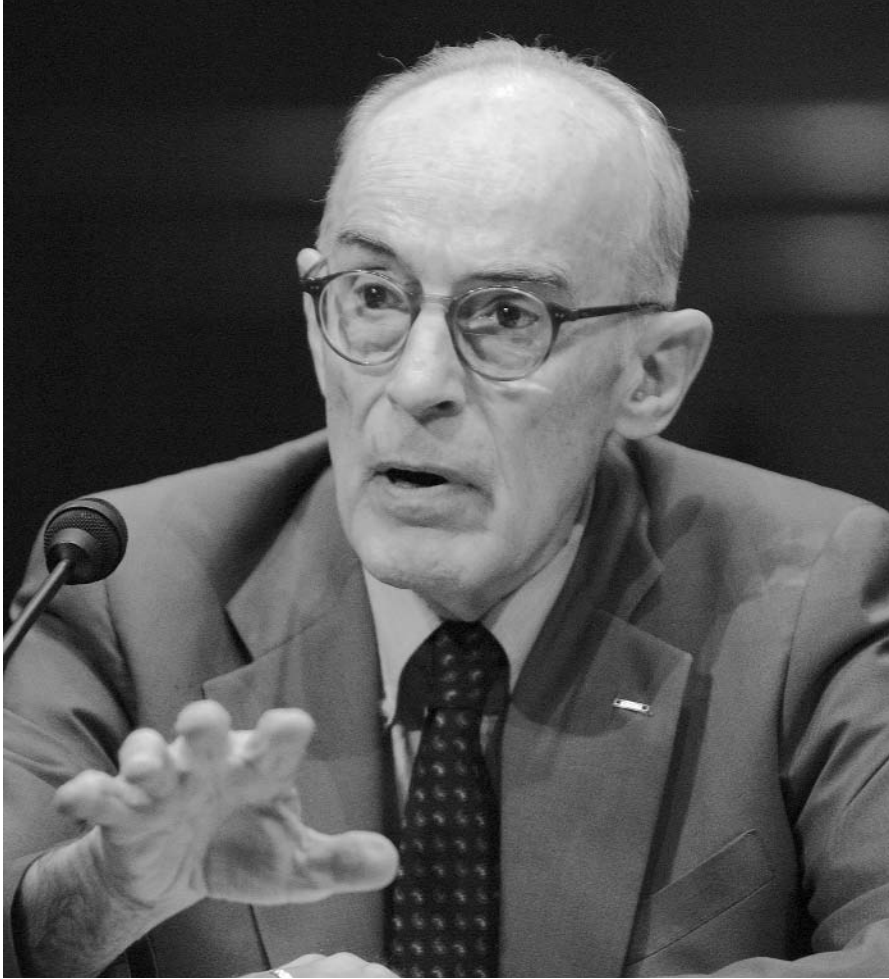
ARTS & LETTERS

28 Steve Sailer: Recalling a Soviet atrocity in "Katyn"

29 W. James Antle III: *The Case Against Barack Obama: The Unlikely Rise and Unexamined Agenda of the Media's Favorite Candidate* by David Freddoso and *McCain: The Myth of a Maverick* by Matt Welch

31 Peter Osborne: *Political Hypocrisy: The Mask of Power, From Hobbes to Orwell and Beyond* by David Runciman

32 Christopher Howse: *A History of Political Trials: From Charles I to Saddam Hussein* by John Laughland



UPI PHOTOS

[COVER]

General Principles

BY RON UNZ Lt. Gen. William Odom refused to fall in line when other top brass parroted the Bush administration's Iraq talking points. **Page 6**

[ELECTION]

Biden Time

BY W. JAMES ANTLE III In choosing his vice president, the candidate of change embraced politics as usual. **Page 12**

[WORLD]

Back in the USSR

BY PETER HITCHENS Alexander Lukashenko's Belarus is brutal and oppressive—yet remains unexploited by the economy of haste. **Page 14**

[IDEAS]

Appetite for Destruction

BY ANDREW J. BACEVICH America externalizes the price of its profligacy by redefining freedom as the right to consume. **Page 18**

COVER DESIGN: MARK GRAEF

[ELECTION]

LOYAL OPPOSITION

Things we heard at the Democratic convention: Michelle Obama loves America, Montana Gov. Brian Schweitzer has high hopes for biofuels, and Virginia Senate candidate Mark Warner foresees a non-partisan future of good ideas. Things we didn't hear: a forceful denunciation of torture, an excoriation of President Bush's domestic spying program, or a rebuke of job-killing trade agreements. Democrats won their congressional majority in 2006 by promising to end the Iraq War. Yet the convention's major speakers barely referred to that debacle. Where is the opposition party?

Obama's "new politics" makes for a good slogan, but it may prove disastrous for democracy. A campaign that attempts to "transcend our differences" will succeed in not offending anyone, but it robs voters of the chance to hold the GOP accountable for its misrule. In the past eight years, the Bush administration has turned a budget surplus into the largest deficit ever, blackened America's reputation with secret prisons, and mocked our Bill of Rights with the Patriot Act. Instead of using their convention to prosecute this case against the GOP, Democrats are making brittle gestures at their own patriotism and religiosity. Afraid of their own shadows, how will they stand up to the battle-scarred and ideologically driven McCain?

Robert Frost said, "A liberal is a man too broadminded to take his own side in a quarrel." For once, it would be a shame if Democrats were to prove him right.

[WAR]

HOME COMING 2011

As DNC speakers skimmed over the issue of Iraq, in Baghdad important news was breaking. "There is an agreement between the two sides that there will be no foreign soldiers in Iraq after 2011," said Prime Minister Nouri al-



KRT PHOTOS LIVE

Maliki. Senior Iraqi officials added that President Bush had signed the deal.

If the announcement was meant to placate Iraqi opposition to the U.S. occupation, it failed. Thousands of Iraqis took to the streets to denounce Maliki and demand that Yankee go home sooner: 2011 was far too late. Moreover, under the alleged proposals—leaked in the Arab press—permanent American military bases would be excluded from the agreement and the timeline for the pullout could be revised if the security situation deteriorates. Hardly a "complete withdrawal."

Yet as Iraqi leaders sought to calm their angry citizens, the Bush administration insisted that any talk of an agreement was false. "Until we have a deal, we don't have a deal," said U.S. State Department spokesman Robert Wood. Other U.S. officials remarked that they would prefer to talk not of "withdrawal timelines" but of "aspirational goals." It is increasingly clear, however, that the highest aspiration of most Iraqis—and many American troops—is for the United States to get out as soon as possible. And stay out.

[POLITICS]

IT'S ALL GEORGIAN TO ME

When Joe Lieberman (ex-D, Conn.) and Lindsey Graham (RINO, S.C.) team up to write an op-ed in the *Wall Street Jour-*

nal, the results can't exactly be called bipartisan. After all, both senators are card-carrying members of the McCain Party—whichever one that is. Lindsey has been known to play porter for his Arizona colleague, while Holy Joe gets a prime-time speaking slot at McCain's coronation in St. Paul. Never mind a dime's worth of difference—in foreign policy, there's not a kopek between Loserman and Grahamnesty.

Their joint piece called for U.S. taxpayers—through international institutions like the IMF and World Bank, in part—to foot the bill for "large-scale, comprehensive reconstruction" in war-torn Georgia, and "any assistance plan must also include the rebuilding of Georgia's security forces." Lest there be any doubt, that means "the Georgian military should be given the anti-aircraft and antiarmor systems necessary to deter any renewed Russian aggression" in order to "make clear we will not allow the Russians to forcibly redraw the boundaries of sovereign nations."

Of course, all the anti-aircraft and antiarmor systems in the world could not have done much for a 26,900-man Georgian military against Putin's 641,000-strong war machine. Graham and Lieberman don't explicitly say in their op-ed that Georgia ought to be brought into NATO, but their drift is clear: "The credibility of Article Five of

the NATO Charter—that an attack against one really can and will be treated as an attack against all—needs to be bolstered.” Yet the surest way to bolster Article Five is not to admit weak nations on Russia’s periphery into the alliance in the first place.

Put Georgia aside and look homeward, Americans. Connecticut Democrats did their best to rid us of Lieberman in 2006, but the Blue Dogs of war and the Nutmeg State’s Republican rump joined forces to keep him around. This year South Carolinians have a chance to dump Lindsey, and in the form of conservative Democrat Bob Conley—a pro-life, antiwar economic nationalist—they have a very attractive alternative. Party labels aren’t worth much these days, and South Carolina’s conservative Republicans should be just as willing as Lindsey Graham to cross the partisan non-divide. Whatever team McCain, Lieberman, and Graham are on isn’t the conservative side. Send them home to Georgia.

[WORLD]

BEIJING RECESSIONAL

The most Olympian feats of the Beijing Games weren’t performed by the athletes but by the host country. After 16 days of shock and awe, the world gathered again in the Bird’s Nest, ready to concede Chinese superiority—at least as measured by marshaling cloned drummers. If the opening ceremony boggled the global imagination, the closing was no less spectacular—or sinister, depending on your point of view. Even gravity gave up without a fight.

So it came as odd relief when London, in accepting the Olympic baton, declined the Chinese challenge. Give the PRC its sleek uniformity, its colors not found on the usual spectrum, its million double-jointed pixies. The British are coming—by bus. A curious assembly, apparently chosen for their ability to hold umbrellas and not look too Anglo, waited while

the double-decker rolled up. It coughed out an unremarkable child, an aging rocker, and soccer stud David Beckham, who nearly created an international incident by drilling a ball into a crowd of Chinese dancers. The bus’s sole concession to showmanship involved morphing into a thicket.

Those inclined to analogy might have seen a portrait of empires—one fading, the other ascendant. China had earned the right to be proud of its Olympic moment and of the rising power it announced. But that quaint bus offered a premonition. Realizing that Britain once mastered the globe should have sent a chill through China’s grand scheme. No arsenal of special effects can keep the sun from setting.

[MILITARY]

NEW MUDDLED ARMY

As defense secretary, Donald Rumsfeld dreamed of transforming the military into a futuristic high-tech force, light in numbers and nimble on its feet. But he probably didn’t plan to staff his smart new Army with recruits who couldn’t handle high school.

Two long wars have left the military struggling to fill its ranks. The Army claims that it’s not lowering standards, which is technically true. It’s just granting many more felony and medical waivers. Bonuses are up, aptitude scores are down.

The latest concession is a GED school for dropouts, located at Fort Jackson, home to the Army’s largest basic training school. In 1990, nearly 100 percent of enlistees held high-school diplomas. That number has slipped to 79 percent, so the Army is playing tutor.

Instructors speak optimistically of their pupils’ progress in reading and math. Perhaps they’ll also study history—and learn the lengths to which desperate powers will go to sustain their losing efforts. ■

The American Conservative

Publisher

Ron Unz

Editor

Scott McConnell

Executive Editor

Kara Hopkins

Associate Editors

Michael Brendan Dougherty

Daniel McCarthy

Literary Editor

Freddy Gray

Film Critic

Steve Sailer

Contributing Editors

W. James Antle III, Andrew J. Bacevich, Doug Bandow, James Bovard, Michael C. Desch, Philip Giraldi, Paul Gottfried, Leon Hadar, Peter Hitchens, Daniel Larison, Christopher Layne, Eric S. Margolis, James P. Pinkerton, Justin Raimondo, Fred Reed, R.J. Stove, Thomas E. Woods Jr.

Art Director

Mark Graef

Associate Publisher

Jon Basil Utley

Publishing Consultant

Ronald E. Burr

Office Manager

Róisín Smyth

Founding Editors

Patrick J. Buchanan, Taki Theodoracopulos

The American Conservative, Vol. 7, No. 17, September 8, 2008 (ISSN 1540-966X). Reg. U.S. Pat. & Tm. Off. TAC is published 24 times per year, biweekly (except for January and August) for \$49.97 per year by The American Conservative, LLC, 1300 Wilson Blvd., Suite 120, Arlington, VA, 22209. Periodicals postage paid at Arlington, VA, and additional mailing offices. Printed in the United States of America. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *The American Conservative*, P.O. Box 9030, Maple Shade, NJ 08052-9030.

Subscription rates: \$49.97 per year (24 issues) in the U.S., \$54.97 in Canada (U.S. funds), and \$89.97 other foreign, via airmail. Back issues: \$6.00 (prepaid) per copy in USA, \$7.00 in Canada (U.S. funds).

For subscription orders, payments, and other subscription inquiries—

By phone: **800-579-6148**

(outside the U.S./Canada 856-380-4131)

Via Web: www.amconmag.com

By mail: *The American Conservative*, P.O. Box 9030, Maple Shade, NJ 08052-9030

When ordering a subscription please allow 4–6 weeks for delivery of your first issue.

Inquiries and letters to the editor should be sent to letters@amconmag.com. For advertising sales or editorial call 703-875-7600.

This issue went to press on August 28, 2008.

Copyright 2008 *The American Conservative*.

[pulling rank]

General Principles

While other top brass played press agents for the administration's war, William Odom told the truth about Iraq—though few listened.

By Ron Unz

MUCH AS THE CAPITAL loves ceremony, Washington won't pause on Sept. 8 when Lt. Gen. William Odom is laid to rest at Arlington Cemetery. While he is worthy of his laurels, he did not court the favor of the Beltway political class. Instead, he disdained their blindness to history, their partisan fixations, their herd mentality. Brave men often stand alone.

Those with knowledge of military affairs recognize different types of courage. There is combat courage—the resolve to storm a position or hold a trench against heavy odds. There is command courage—the willingness of officers to take decisive action and sustain losses to secure victory. And there is a third variety, crucial at the topmost ranks of America's officer corps but increasingly rare—political courage, the willingness to speak truth to political power. Bill Odom, whom I greatly admired and respected, exemplified this last, most elusive kind of courage, which is why his death of a heart attack on May 30 leaves such a void in America's foreign-policy debate.

He passed away too soon, but in some ways Odom had already lived past his time, the era of Cold War liberal internationalism. After graduating from West Point in 1954, he served in Germany and Vietnam and was later posted to the

Moscow embassy. Following several years of teaching at West Point, he came to Washington as an aide to Zbigniew Brzezinski, President Carter's national security adviser. There, he gained a reputation as "Zbig's superhawk" for his staunch opposition to détente and his prescient speculations about the possible break-up of the Soviet Union before the end of the century. He went on to serve as assistant chief of staff of the Army for Intelligence and director of the National Security Agency under President Reagan.

In the wake of Sept. 11, this retired three-star general, long a pillar of the foreign-policy establishment, seemed uniquely qualified to be heard. Indeed, he was one of the earliest senior military figures to issue public warnings as the hysterical drive to invade Iraq eventually became a calamitous occupation, an outcome that he later described as "the greatest strategic disaster in U.S. history."

But since Odom first arrived in D.C.—and especially after the fall of the Soviet Union—the town has become more and more an Imperial City, whose Imperial Court rules a global empire, albeit an increasingly beleaguered and bankrupt one. Competence is far less important to advancement than glibness, media intrigue, and the flattery of wealthy

patrons. Sober views of military and geopolitical limits have little place in an administration whose courtiers deride their opponents as members of the "reality-based community." Therefore, after 9/11, America's most prestigious newspapers—the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *Wall Street Journal*—virtually closed their pages to Odom's discordant views.

Reduced to publishing on small websites like NiemanWatchdog.org, he refused to blunt his critique. Odom's web columns had titles like "Six brutal truths about Iraq," "Iraq through the prism of Vietnam," and "What's wrong with cutting and running?" Other national columnists said similar things—if more cautiously—but most were liberal pundits with negligible military credentials. Odom had served as one of Ronald Reagan's highest-ranking national security officials, and his words should have carried enormous weight.

Yet who did the mainstream media select to inform the American public? An endless stream of youthful neocons, almost none of whom had ever worn an American uniform, but who had instead chosen to make their careers in the gilded cocoon of "conservative" think tanks and punditry. Ironically, some of the loudest might have had their closest encounter with military service when

they took Odom's courses in strategy at Yale, though they obviously learned nothing.

There lies another telling contrast. Odom was a career military man. His ancestor Col. George Waller had served with George Washington at Yorktown; two of his great-grandfathers fought for the Confederacy. His only son, Mark, led dangerous field operations in Iraq before being injured last year in an insurgent bombing. Odom was also a serious scholar, with a Columbia Ph.D. in political science, a long list of academic books and journal articles, and an adjunct professorship at Yale.

But to the editors of the major dailies, the proper experts were neocon word-mongers, whose only books were shallow diatribes on subjects ranging from abortion to tax policy to defense, all written with equally zestful ignorance. They knew little about the Mideast or the military, but held advanced degrees in networking, doctorates in self-promotion, and had paid their dues by courting every editor on the cocktail-party circuit. After all, if reality doesn't exist, why not hire your friends to analyze it?

Yet with America at war, pasty-faced, 30-something Heritage alumni writing endless newspaper columns on grand strategy—and gay marriage—would inspire no confidence on television. The public needed to see high-ranking veterans, solemn and stern-faced, validating the actions of the Bush administration.

That's exactly what they got. From the moment the planes hit the World Trade Center, the networks, and the cable news channels in particular, developed an insatiable hunger for military commentators, graying former generals heavy on brass and ribbons. Their judgments could not easily be dismissed, given their professional expertise and lifetimes of service, and almost invariably, they supported the views of the

White House. The public trusted them and followed where they led—into Afghanistan and then Iraq.

We discovered how much their credibility was worth on April 20, when the *New York Times*—at long last—published an exposé, based on 8,000 pages of Pentagon e-mail and transcripts, about the business activities and financial ties of these supposedly dispassionate experts. CNN paid them as much as \$1,000 per appearance, but most were simultaneously receiving vastly greater sums from their military procurement and government contracting work. For example, Gen. James Marks appeared regularly on cable news throughout 2006, even as he was involved in bidding, through his work with McNeil Technologies, for a \$4.6 billion contract to provide translators in Iraq.

One might crudely say that the government owned 99 percent of these men while the news channels rented 1 percent—and then asked them their opinion of the government. Their financial futures were in the hands of the administration officials they were evaluating on television.

THERE IS A WORD FOR MILITARY OFFICERS WHO TRADE AWAY THEIR OWN COUNTRY'S NATIONAL-SECURITY INTERESTS FOR LARGE FINANCIAL PAYMENTS, AND IT IS NOT A PLEASANT ONE.

The White House played this relationship to full advantage. Bush officials routinely organized briefings to provide inside information to these pundits and to tailor their commentary. The *New York Times* uncovered Pentagon documents describing the talking-head generals as “message force multipliers” or “surrogates,” who could be counted on to propagate the administration's message “in the form of their opinions.” The Pentagon even hired Omnitec Solutions,

a consulting company, to watch the television appearances and grade the performances of these purportedly neutral commentators. The reviews were then passed on to Bush appointees at the Pentagon who controlled the flow of procurement funding.

There are documented examples of retired generals believing that the situation in Iraq was an absolute disaster, but providing only the requested Happy News to millions of Americans seeking their wisdom on television. After returning from a government-sponsored trip to Iraq, Gen. Paul E. Vallely, a Fox News analyst, told Alan Colmes, “You can't believe the progress,” predicting that the insurgency would be reduced “to a few numbers” within months. But he later told the *New York Times*, “I saw immediately that things were going south in 2003.”

Many of these former high-ranking American military officers should have every right to request membership in the Screen Actors Guild, and in some cases their theatrical pay might place them near the upper end of the Hollywood wage scale. There is a particular word for military officers who trade away

their own country's national security interests for large financial payments, and it is not a pleasant one.

Bill Odom instead held to the code of traditional military honor. He had not entered the Armed Forces in hopes of acquiring a huge Loudoun County mansion. When he left his home in rural Appalachia to enroll at West Point, his reasons were patriotism and public service—as was almost universally true among members of his generation.

These selfless motives persist in today's military—but perhaps to a lesser degree. Social and financial corruption frequently start at the top, and when American generals leverage their military careers to become multi-millionaires, many colonels, majors, and captains may begin thinking along similar lines.

Indeed, America's explicit doctrine of substituting payment for public spirit and personal integrity has reached new levels of absurdity in our Iraq policies. One-fifth—some \$100 billion—of our military spending in Iraq has gone to private contractors. This category includes the many tens of thousands of “security contractors”—private mercenaries—who constitute an important fraction of the occupation forces.

Many of these are South Africans, Brazilians, or French, the traditional “wild geese” who have long traveled the world in search of lucrative wars to fight. But a disturbingly high number are American. When experienced soldiers can quit the Army and immediately return to Iraq as hired guns, making five or six times their previous salaries, they might easily conclude that national military service is merely for the gullible. Thus some fraction of today's bloated Pentagon budget is actually spent to lure America's best troops into abandoning their military careers, thereby hollowing out our ground forces.

Some adventuresome neocon pundits have even suggested opening the American Armed Forces to any foreigners willing to join. In return for high pay and automatic citizenship, they need only march wherever their officers tell them to march and shoot whomever their officers tell them to shoot. There is a long record of ugly precedents for countries that choose to replace their national militaries with foreign mercenaries, but history experts who have never read a history book might remain unaware of this.

Although such massive corruption is without modern American precedent, the Iraq War's parallels to Vietnam are obvious. Liberal pundits are reluctant to note the similarities, lest they be denounced as “unpatriotic” by their bellicose conservative colleagues. But Bill Odom suffered no such qualms. When he saw Vietnam recurring, he said so—and dared anyone to contradict him.

As a staff officer in Saigon, he witnessed firsthand the utter futility and disastrous consequences of that war, both for that country and for the cohesion of the American military. Years later, he pointed out that since the strategic rationale had been to contain China, our war with Hanoi made no sense, given that the Vietnamese were traditionally the strongest local adversaries of the Chinese and indeed fought a bloody border war with China almost immediately after America's departure. Also, Soviet Russia was America's great antagonist during that period, and containing China was a key Russian objective, so our war was actually fought on behalf of our leading international adversary. The true reason we spent so many years sacrificing vast quantities of American blood, money, and credibility in the jungles of Southeast Asia was that ending the war would be an admission that American leaders had made a horrible mistake in beginning it.

Following 9/11, our Mideast strategy became similarly irrational. Odom noted that Saddam Hussein, a secular Arab nationalist, had for decades been the greatest regional enemy of both the Iranians and radical Islamists such as Osama bin Laden. Therefore, our Iraq War was serving the interests of these hostile, anti-American powers. And for several years now, it has been obvious that the single greatest reason America does not withdraw from Iraq is the fear of acknowledging our blunder.

When I first met Bill Odom in the early 1990s, shortly after the Cold War ended and he had become director of the National Security Program at the Hudson Institute, he was hopeful that America would become more of a “normal country.” His last book, begun at the end of the 1990s with Robert Dujarric, one of my college roommates, was entitled *America's Inadvertent Empire*. It analyzed the United States' enormous military, economic, technological, and cultural power but never considered that those assets might be turned to wars of imperial conquest and occupation.

Of course, Sept. 11 changed everything. Since that date America has begun behaving as an exceptionally abnormal country, and Odom's disappearance means our leaders' dangerous course is even less likely to receive honest analysis. Days before his death, Odom had co-authored a *Washington Post* piece with Brzezinski, urging an immediate strategic rapprochement with Iran as a means of stabilizing Iraq pursuant to an American withdrawal. The *Post* had finally become willing to publish Odom's views, but his counsel seemed to fall on deaf ears. The danger of an American attack on Iran may have since faded—presumably being embroiled in two wars makes the Pentagon cautious about starting another—but belligerent rhetoric continues to issue from all major political candidates. America has 200,000 troops occupying Iraq on the other side of the world and has already caused the deaths of over 1 million Iraqi civilians, but American leaders still regularly denounce Iran for its “interference” in its next-door neighbor. Bill Odom smiled at politicians who demonstrate such political blindness.

The most chilling of his public pronouncements has received little attention, though it might be regarded as his

last will and testament to the country he loved. In early April, he and a number of other prominent military critics of the Iraq War were called to give Congressional testimony. All criticized the occupation and urged a rapid American withdrawal, but Odom went farther. He said that without prompt action, Baghdad could become America's Dien Bien Phu, where superior French forces were surrounded, trapped, cut off from supplies, and ultimately destroyed by Vietnamese guerrillas.

The comparison is not as absurd as it might seem. America possesses a powerful force in Iraq, but, as military analyst William Lind has repeatedly emphasized, that force is almost entirely dependent on a long and slender supply line from Kuwait, which runs through territory controlled by Shi'ite forces friendly to Iran. Some 500 tanker trucks of fuel must reach the American Army each day for it to maintain operational mobility. If widespread guerrilla action were to reduce substantially the number or transit speed of those convoys, America's advantage in advanced hardware—our primary strength—would become increasingly irrelevant.

Under such a scenario, any American president who finally issued a command to withdraw would be forced to abandon vast amounts of military hardware, thereby publicly formalizing the greatest defeat in American history. But any president who did not issue such a humiliating withdrawal order would risk the total loss of America's huge expeditionary force. That result would rank with the greatest military disasters in all history—enormously worse than Dien Bien Phu, and comparable in scale to the doomed Sicilian Expedition of the Athenians.

As a serious scholar, Bill Odom knew his Thucydides. But the country he leaves behind does not. ■

The fighting between Georgia and Russia is yet another U.S. foreign-policy disaster in which Washington might have encouraged a war where there was no conceivable American interest. It is also, by all accounts, the latest major intelligence failure. When Tbilisi staged its surprise attack into South Ossetia, the United States had no less than 130 soldiers and Defense Department contractors training the Georgian forces through the embassy's Office of Defense Cooperation. Some were actually U.S. Army intelligence officers educating the Georgian army in their craft. There was also a CIA station and an embassy political section tasked with developing confidential relationships with Georgia's political leadership. U.S. Ambassador John Tefft reportedly could drop in on President Mikheil Saakashvili any time he wished to do so.

In addition to the American contingent, the Israelis had a very large presence providing \$500 million worth of equipment and training to the Georgians, funded through two U.S. assistance programs. The Israeli media has been reporting that there were hundreds of former military officers working as trainers in Georgia.

This version of a greater Caucasus co-prosperity sphere was greased by an estimated \$2 billion in U.S. assistance used to maintain and upgrade the Georgian military, partially to enable it to serve in Iraq but also to protect the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline and confront nonexistent al-Qaeda elements in the Pankisi Gorge. The assistance program involved frequent interaction with all levels of the Georgian military, but the Americans and Israelis did not know what Tbilisi was up to, though invading a country even on a small scale is no turnkey operation. Planning and preparation involving thousands of Georgians went apparently unnoticed by the many foreign observers in the country.

The U.S. advisers were withdrawn to Tbilisi, and the Israelis were evacuated back to their own country after fighting broke out, leaving so quickly that they abandoned their classified training materials. When Moscow counterattacked, the United States found itself equally blind in spite of a large CIA station and diplomatic presence in Russia. Are there any spies here? Apparently not.

A rough after-action assessment of the intelligence failure both in Russia and in Georgia reveals the usual problems. Spy satellites, which might have detected the movement of troops, were instead watching Iraq and Afghanistan. Lacking language and cultural skills, the U.S. intelligence community relied on its Georgian counterparts to provide the information that it needed. When the friendly liaison service has something to conceal, such information becomes disinformation. Diplomats and military officers, meanwhile, uncritically accepted what their Georgian interlocutors were telling them. The Israelis were also apparently too busy turning a buck to notice what was going on. One Israeli officer returned from Georgia noting that the training had been perfunctory because turning trainees over rapidly provided opportunities to make more money. Both Israeli and American instructors agreed that the frequently illiterate Georgian conscripts were poor soldiers, led by mediocre officers and unfit for any military action, but they were reluctant to report their observations because they would not have been well received in Washington and Tel Aviv.

Philip Giraldi, a former CIA Officer, is a fellow at the American Conservative Defense Alliance.

Unpatriotic Conservative

Who is Randy Scheunemann? He is the principal foreign-policy adviser to John McCain and potential successor to Henry Kissinger and Zbigniew Brzezinski as

national security adviser to the president of the United States.

But Randy Scheunemann has another identity. He is a dual loyalist, a foreign agent whose assignment is to get America committed to spilling the blood of her sons for client regimes who have made this moral mercenary a rich man.

From January 2007 to March 2008, the McCain campaign paid Scheunemann \$70,000—pocket change compared to the \$290,000 his Orion Strategies banked in those same 15 months from the Georgian regime of Mikheil Saakashvili.

What were Mikheil's marching orders to Tbilisi's man in Washington? Get Georgia a NATO war guarantee. Get America committed to fight Russia, if necessary, on behalf of Georgia.

Scheunemann came close to succeeding. Had he done so, U.S. soldiers and Marines from Idaho would be killing Russians in the Caucasus and dying to protect Scheunemann's client. That people like Scheunemann hire out to put American lives on the line for their clients is a classic corruption of American democracy.

U.S. backing for his campaign to retrieve his lost provinces is what Saakashvili paid Scheunemann to produce. But why should Americans fight Russians to force 70,000 South Ossetians back into the custody of a regime they detest? Why not let the South Ossetians decide their own future in free elections?

Not only is the folly of the Bush interventionist policy on display in the Caucasus, so, too, is its manifest incoherence.

Defense Secretary Robert Gates says we have sought for 45 years to stay out of a shooting war with Russia, and we are not going to get into one now. President Bush assured us there would be no U.S. military response to the Russian move into Georgia.

That is a recognition of reality—namely, that Russia's control of South Ossetia and Abkhazia and occupation of a strip of Georgia cannot be a *casus belli* for the United States. We may deplore it, but it cannot justify war with Russia.

If that be true, and it transparently is, what are McCain, Obama, Bush, and German Chancellor Angela Merkel doing committing the United States and Germany to bringing Georgia into NATO? For that would commit us to war for a cause we have already conceded, by our paralysis, does not justify a war.

Not only has Scheunemann's two-man lobbying firm received \$730,000 since 2001 to get Georgia a NATO war guarantee, he was paid by Romania and Latvia to do the same. And he succeeded.

Latvia, a tiny Baltic republic annexed by Joseph Stalin in June 1940 during his pact with Adolf Hitler, was set free at the end of the Cold War. Yet hundreds of thousands of Russians had been moved into Latvia by Stalin, and as Riga served as a base of the Baltic Sea fleet, many Russian naval officers retired there.

The children and grandchildren of these Russians are Latvian citizens. They are a cause of tension with ethnic Letts and of strife with Moscow, which has assumed the role of protector of Russians left in the "near abroad" when

the Soviet Union broke apart.

Thanks to the lobbying of Scheunemann and friends, Latvia has been brought into NATO and given a U.S. war guarantee. If Russia intervenes to halt some nasty ethnic violence in Riga, the United States is committed to come in and drive the Russians out.

This is the situation in which the interventionists have placed our country: committed to going to war for causes that do not justify war against a Russia that is re-emerging as a great power only to find NATO squatting on her doorstep.

Scheunemann's résumé as a War Party apparatchik is lengthy. He signed the Project for the New American Century letter to President Clinton urging war on Iraq, four years before 9/11. He signed the PNAC ultimatum to Bush, nine days after 9/11, threatening him with political reprisal if he did not go to war against Iraq. He was executive director of the "Committee for the Liberation of Iraq," a propaganda front for Ahmad Chalabi and his pack of liars who deceived us into war.

Now Scheunemann is the neocon agent in place in McCain's camp. The neocons got their war with Iraq. They are pushing for war on Iran. And they are now baiting the Russian Bear. Why would McCain seek foreign-policy counsel from the same discredited crowd that has all but destroyed the presidency of George W. Bush?

"Against the insidious wiles of foreign influence ... a free people ought to be constantly awake," Washington said in his Farewell Address. Our Founding Father was warning against the Randy Scheunemanns among us, agents hired by foreign powers to deceive Americans into fighting their wars. And none dare call it treason. ■

The Asquith Analogy

Georgia is the new Belgium.

By Daniel Koffler

THE ABORTIVE WAR over South Ossetia and Abkhazia has inspired a surge of historical analogies. According to overwrought commentators like Roger Kimball of *The New Criterion*, “August 8 was the date when Russia began reassembling the former Soviet empire in earnest,” while in the comparatively temperate assessment of John McCain, Putin merely wants “to restore the old Russian empire.” For neoconservatives, naturally, the standoff in the Caucasus recalls nothing so much as Munich 1938—Robert Kagan needed only one prefatory sentence in his *Washington Post* op-ed to invoke “the Sudeten Crisis that led to Nazi Germany’s invasion of Czechoslovakia.” William Kristol capped off a *New York Times* column by asking, “Is it not true today, as it was in the 1920s and ’30s, that delay and irresolution on the part of the democracies simply invite future threats and graver dangers?”

In this deluge of commentary, almost every analogue bearing even the most superficial resemblance to the Russia-Georgia conflict has received its share of attention. (Give Council on Foreign Relations fellow Max Boot an Olympic gold for simultaneously likening the Russian invasion to Soviet, Nazi, Italian fascist, and imperial Japanese aggression.) But the most fitting historical precedent has gone unmentioned. In trying to decide what to do in the Caucasus, the United States finds itself in a position strikingly similar to that of Great Britain in 1914. After Germany’s invasion of Belgium, Prime Minister H.H. Asquith and Foreign Secretary

Edward Grey faced a choice between neutrality and intervention. The decision they made proved fatal.

All the reasons today’s Russia hawks can give for taking hostile action were available, *mutatis mutandis*, to Asquith, Grey, and their colleagues. Additionally, unlike the United States today, Britain in 1914 had an unimpeachable justification for intervention in the form of Article VII of the 1839 Treaty of London, which bound signatory states, including Britain and Germany (the latter having inherited Prussia’s diplomatic obligations), to uphold the “perpetual” independence and neutrality of Belgium and by implication to defend it against attack.

Asquith and Grey’s decision to honor Britain’s guarantee to Belgium—surely a weightier commitment than whatever *sotto voce* understandings might exist between the Georgian president and the lobbyists in Senator McCain’s foreign-policy team—ranks high among the worst strategic decisions ever made. The price of victory for Britain in World War I was ultimately the dissolution of its empire and its decline to the status of a second-tier power. The cost to the world at large included adding millions of deaths to the butcher’s bill of the Great War, the unleashing of both Bolshevik and fascist oppression, the even greater carnage of the war’s sequel, and the descent of the Iron Curtain. To this day, aftershocks of Asquith’s folly are felt in places like Baghdad, Harare, Belgrade, and Karachi. For all of these and many other human disasters, the British cabinet’s determination to gamble on

war with Germany was a necessary—albeit insufficient—condition.

The best that can be said in defense of the decision-makers in London is that the conflict upon which they embarked had no precedent, and they couldn’t have known what would follow their declaration of war. But with the example of 1914 behind us, there is no excuse for repeating the errors of the Asquith-Grey government and launching an avoidable war against a power that can only be defeated at a staggering cost—if it can be defeated at all.

The lessons of the summer of 1914 can scarcely be clearer. But that has not deterred a cadre of cut-rate Edward Greys—some of whom, like Kristol, Kagan, and Boot, have the ear of the man who might become the next president—from advocating, among other things, expelling Russia from the G-8; imposing severe diplomatic and economic sanctions; boycotting Russian-hosted international athletic competitions and barring Russian athletes from contests outside their country; accelerating the expansion of NATO to include states like Georgia; and installing missile defense and other weapons systems on Russia’s doorstep in Eastern Europe. Most troubling of all is Boot’s proposal to ship shoulder-mounted anti-tank missiles to Georgia. Apparently, the way to show solidarity with our Georgian brethren is to use them to wage a proxy war against Russia.

The columnists pushing for provocative measures do not, of course, explicitly demand war. But then, the members

of the British Cabinet in July and August 1914 did not call for all-out war immediately after the assassination of Franz Ferdinand, either. Rather, at every juncture they took steps to make war more likely, persevering in the face of predictable German responses, until the results of their own decisions led them to reckon war inescapable.

The popular conception of the First World War as the inevitable product of grand historical forces began with the self-serving and highly influential post-war memoirs of Asquith, Grey, and Winston Churchill on the British side and those of Bethmann-Hollweg and others among the Germans. Grey had actually protested as early as May 1915 that he “had no power to decide policy” in the July Crisis of the previous year.

The assumption of the war’s inevitability—which conveniently absolved the guilty parties of their personal responsibility—became the prevailing view as it took hold in literary portrayals of the war from Erich Maria Remarque and Karl Kraus. Yet in spite of the blunders of European statecraft in the years leading to war, every stage in the conflict’s escalation was eminently preventable. The only insurmountable obstacle to avoiding war was the unwillingness of those in power to pull their countries back from the precipice.

Today’s blundering hawks find historical determinism every bit as useful as Asquith once did. Reassessing the Iraq conflict in *Slate* last year, Christopher Hitchens contended that “Iraq was headed straight for implosion and failure, both as a state and a society, well before 2003” and therefore “canceling or postponing an intervention would only have meant having to act later on, in conditions even more awful and dangerous than the ones with which we have become familiar.” One can be sure of a similar line emerging if the neocons succeeded in getting the United States into a

proxy war with Russia. Already, with their rhetoric likening the Caucasus crisis to the beginnings of World War II, Kristol and Kagan are leaning heavily on a theory of historical inevitability—Russia must behave as Germany once behaved, and the U.S. must again play the role of savior.

If history did repeat, there would be a clear if grim rationale for pre-emptive war against every nation on the neoconservatives’ enemies list, since the only alternative would be to concede the tactical initiative in conflicts that are coming no matter what we do. But this

view of history is wrong. It was no more inevitable that Britain and Germany would be plunged into war in the early 20th century than it was inevitable that the United States and Soviet Union would go to war in the late 20th century. The decision-makers in the latter case, fortunately, could look back on earlier World Wars to see how they might avoid making the mistakes of previous leaders—as we would do well to look to the lessons of World War I today. ■

Daniel Koffler is a graduate student in philosophy at the University of Oxford.

Biden Time

Obama finds his Dick Cheney.

By W. James Antle III

THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY didn’t set out to hand its nomination to the least experienced major presidential candidate. But if Democrats wanted a nominee who stood from the beginning with the majority of their voters against the invasion of Iraq—and they did not want to nominate Dennis Kucinich or Mike Gravel—they had little choice. Barack Obama’s response to the charge that he was unprepared to lead was simple: he alone among the viable contenders possessed the judgment to oppose the Iraq War before the shock and awe faded. Implicit in this rejoinder was a willingness to reject the soft neoconservatism that has come to dominate the Democratic foreign-policy establishment.

So what message did Obama send by picking Joe Biden as his running mate? A Gilda Radner-like, “Nevermind.” Certainly, Obama could have done worse. Virginia Gov. Tim Kaine would have

given the Democrats a pair of leaders who began the decade in the Illinois state senate and on the Richmond city council. Evan Bayh would have given Obama a running mate who voted for the Bush tax cuts and a Republican opponent who voted against them.

It is nevertheless difficult to reconcile Obama’s choice with a desire to shake up the Democratic establishment—Biden, a classic Washington pol, is a fixture of that elite. He has been in the Senate for six terms and first made a run for the Democratic presidential nomination 20 years ago, back when Neil Kinnock was actually the British Labour leader and not merely some fellow whose speeches Biden once cribbed.

Biden voted for the Iraq War, agreeing with the Bush administration that Saddam Hussein in 2002 was “a long term threat and a short term threat to our national security,” as well as “an extreme

danger to the world.” As late as 2007, he was defending the original rationale for the war. On “Meet the Press,” Biden said of Saddam’s weapons of mass destruction, “everyone in the world thought he had them. The weapons inspectors said he had them. ... This was not some, some Cheney, you know, pipe dream.”

In 2005, Biden told the Brookings Institution that withdrawing from Iraq would be a “gigantic mistake” and any “deadline for pulling out, which I fear will only encourage our enemies to wait us out” would be “equally a mistake.” In the run-up to the 2008 Democratic primaries, however, he criticized Obama and Hillary Clinton for voting against Iraq funding bills that did not contain a timetable for withdrawal, arguing that it would result in American forces having to return at a later date. Such rhetoric is little different from John McCain’s.

During the 1990s, Biden was clamoring for U.S. forces to intervene in the Balkans even before McCain did. He supported airstrikes against Serbia and the Kosovo war before Bill Clinton. Since then, he has favored humanitarian involvement in all the usual places, including Georgia and Darfur.

That’s not to say he has never departed from our current foreign policy in any significant way. Biden worked with Republican Sen. Richard Lugar to craft a more restrictive war resolution that would have required President Bush to exhaust all diplomatic options before using force—though, again, he voted for the more permissive resolution that actually passed. He also worked with Republican Sen. Chuck Hagel to oppose the surge. Biden has advocated a soft partition of Iraq as a way of ending sectarian strife. And his call to make security aid to Pakistan conditional on results represents an effort to refocus the war on terror on al-Qaeda and the Taliban.

Little of this amounts to a major rethinking of American foreign policy

nearly two decades after the end of the Cold War, however. Rather than standing athwart the Bush Doctrine yelling stop, Biden’s counsel is “Slow down and bring more friends.” It would be less significant if this were the only sign that Obama’s thinking on this subject was mostly conventional. When Ronald Reagan chose the elder George Bush in 1980, it was clear that he still intended to nudge the Republican Party to the right even if he was willing to work with the country-club old guard. Obama, by contrast, has been sending mixed signals about where he would lead his party.

Obama selected Biden to address a real political problem. As Jay Cost observed on the RealClearPolitics website, the race has so far been close because jittery Republicans nominated a candidate who can appeal beyond their base and distance himself from Bush while confident Democrats opted for a nominee with a slender résumé and exotic background. Swing voters tend to agree with Obama that the Iraq War was a mistake, but still think McCain is better qualified to be commander in chief. Biden is supposed to add experience and gravitas to the ticket.

It’s easy to imagine a bolder choice—someone who recognized the folly of Iraq early on but still has foreign-policy credentials, and a long record of defending our country from threats to national security, a candidate who does not embrace Pax Americana, yet whose Cold War history makes him impossible to caricature as a pacifist. Jim Webb could have played that role, or Sam Nunn, or perhaps—in a reverse Lieberman—even Chuck Hagel. But that would have required a Democratic Party more interested in a prudent approach to international affairs than gays in the military or abortion on demand.

Understanding the Democrats’ priorities helps explain why Obama went with a safe pick who toes the party line on

domestic policy and goes with the flow on foreign affairs. Biden is a smart and capable man, whose talents are well suited for the Senate. He can savagely attack Robert Bork or Clarence Thomas one minute, then deliver a moving eulogy for Strom Thurmond the next—post-Trent Lott. He can support a partial-birth-abortion ban and then denounce the Supreme Court when it upholds the very law he voted for. Biden’s wit and blue-collar persona will help balance Obama’s aloofness and lack of appeal to white working-class Catholics. On the other hand, his windbaggy may weigh down an already loquacious ticket. The *Politico* warns, “the Obama team will spend some sleepless nights wondering what he might say at any given moment.” *Newsweek*’s Howard Fineman says simply, “He can’t keep his mouth shut.”

Opposition researchers will surely have a field day with Biden’s gaffes, temperament, money from lobbyists, and especially his past criticisms of Obama’s readiness for the presidency. Yet the biggest vote of no-confidence may have come from Barack Obama himself. In choosing Joe Biden for vice president, he was seeking a reassuring old establishment hand, a second Dick Cheney. That doesn’t say much about his stomach for undoing the handiwork of the first one. ■

W. James Antle III is associate editor of The American Spectator.

Visit our blog

@TAC 
www.amconmag.com/blog

updated daily

Back in the USSR

Two decades after the end of the Cold War, Belarus has yet to warm to democratic capitalism—for good and ill.

By Peter Hitchens

I STILL REMEMBER the first time I passed through the fence that once separated our world from the other one, a somnolent spring afternoon on the border between what were then West Germany and Czechoslovakia. Until that day, I never knew how mixed my feelings could be.

I hated what I expected to hate and feared what I expected to fear. There they all were: rolls of barbed wire; border guards crawling over and under the train; the sudden change from clean and modern to old and grimy; smoggy air and wet cobbles; red banners; wobbly, rationed goods in shop windows, the flaccid pork and exhausted vegetables; the wary, closed white faces and stainless steel false teeth; the surveillance and fear of being overheard.

But I liked, or at least appreciated and respected, some of what I saw. Above all were the small but blindingly bright flashes of courage, endurance, and humor amid the oppression. There was something heroic about many of these people, which could not often be said of the upholstered, banal lives we led in the other world.

There was also the way in which poverty and backwardness had not exactly preserved old things, but at least had so far failed to destroy some traces of the past that had been eradicated in my wealthy, ever-modernizing section of the planet. There was an overwhelming sense of place, a knowledge that

nowhere else was remotely like this, which was even then increasingly rare in Western Europe. Was all our progress an unmitigated good? Had it destroyed things of value?

And there was a little guilty doubt about our jaunty rhetoric of freedom, justice, and vigilance—a sense of a smelly bargain done in a corner, which had paid for our liberty with their serfdom. I might have crossed a fearsome, jagged, and heavily guarded frontier, in theory the starting line if war ever began between the titanic armies of NATO and the Warsaw Pact. But Western governments recognized that frontier, sent ambassadors to Prague, and accepted the existence of this sadder part of Europe as normal, necessary, and permanent.

I was baffled ever afterward that so few in the West used their freedom to explore the far side. The people over there longed unbearably to experience our lives, but mostly had no hope of doing so. Wasn't it a duty to experience their lives? Crossing this border changed me, completely and forever.

Now, thanks to the unexpected collapse of the Evil Empire, I am one of a small and highly privileged band of people who saw the Communist world. I am not sure I would believe that it had ever existed, if I had not seen it.

I have often half-seriously thought that the Western powers should have clubbed together to maintain the old East Germany as a theme park so that

future generations could see what real socialism was truly like, right down to the soup, the beer, and the plumbing. Many East Germans, as is now clear, would have been surprisingly happy to live in such a place—another undoubted problem that we in the rich world have never bothered to try to understand. We are afraid of examining it because we know too well that our new united planet isn't as good as it could have been.

Clever movies such as "Good Bye Lenin" and "The Lives of Others" make the former East Germany out to have been better than it really was. But then, that is the way it seems to many former East Germans disappointed and disturbed by the triumphant West.

But perhaps the opportunity to revisit this paradoxical alternative world is not entirely lost. East Germany has now almost entirely disappeared under an avalanche of money. Its last, lingering spirit can be detected only with difficulty in a few small corners of Berlin on a late winter's afternoon. You may sniff it in the eerie Treptow Park where the Soviet War Memorial still stands, pointedly ignored by those it was meant to overawe. And you can see and hear it in what remains of the colossal wreck of the planned settlement of Halle Neustadt, where much of the city has been deserted and demolished, but a few dogged old Communists still live in their expensively refurbished housing blocks, clinging to the values of Marxist-Leninism until they die.

Travel a few hundred miles further east, though, passing through the latest version of Poland, and you come to the curious, accidental country of Belarus, which might have been invented for educational purposes. Such a place never existed before and probably will not for much longer. It is independent of Russia only as an unintended side effect of the break-up of the USSR at the end of the Gorbachev era. They broke it off and forgot to stick it back on again. Its independence from Moscow lacks conviction. There is in reality no proper border with Russia, whose citizens can slip in and out at will.

But there is certainly still a border with “The West,” a phrase that still means something here. And what a border it is. After nearly a thousand miles of passport-free travel, from the English Channel to Warsaw, the voyager is abruptly required to produce his documents, visa and all, properly stamped, just as in the old days. Trains cannot even cross without having their wheels removed, for long ago the Russian empire adopted a wider gauge to prevent a rail-borne invasion.

Here at Brest on the river Bug—travelers who wish to rest overnight may stay in the Hotel Bug—stands the final frontier of the European Union, an abrupt and total stop to that strange, postmodern empire of deliberately forgotten history, bureaucracy, and subsidy. The EU may dream of one day incorporating Ukraine and even Turkey. But Belarus? I don’t think so. The place is too troublesome and unpredictable. An inhabitant of Brest—provided he was on nobody’s death list and was generally lucky—might have lived in five different countries in one century without so much as moving house.

In this disputed city, just by the Polish frontier, are the ruins of the mighty fortress of Brest Litovsk, built by the tsars, acquired by Pilsudski’s Poland in

1921, taken back by Stalin in his pact with Hitler in 1939, conquered by Hitler in 1941, retaken by Stalin in 1944, the property of an independent Belarus since 1991, and who knows what next?

Brest provided the backdrop to a nightmare joint victory parade by the Red Army and Hitler’s Wehrmacht in the autumn of 1940. Pictures still exist of this queasy event, but there is no sign of any cheering crowd.

Within the smashed walls of its citadel lies the shell of the old White Palace, scene of the “forgotten peace” of Brest Litovsk, the very spot where a petulant Leon Trotsky stormed away from the table as Bolshevik-ruled Russia was humiliated and dismembered by the Kaiser’s ungrateful Germany. An almost identical humiliation, driving Russia back to eerily similar borders, was imposed on Moscow by an equally ungrateful Washington after Mikhail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin ended the Cold War.

IT IS INDEPENDENT OF RUSSIA ONLY AS AN UNINTENDED SIDE EFFECT OF THE BREAK-UP OF THE USSR. THEY BROKE IT OFF AND FORGOT TO STICK IT BACK ON AGAIN.

As for Belarus itself, a flat and defenseless territory on the main invasion route between Paris and Moscow, its fertile soil is watered with blood and full of bones—Russian, Polish, French, German, and, of course, Jewish. No wonder its people are keen on all the tranquility they can get. Currently, they get quite a lot.

This is thanks to the extraordinary Alexander Lukashenko, an inexcusable and increasingly unbalanced tyrant whose enemies often disappear mysteriously, if they are not beaten up by his police or flung into his prisons after travesties of trials. No wonder Belarus has joined Burma, Zimbabwe, and Cuba as a State Department-designated “Outpost

of Tyranny,” a classification that has replaced the obsolete “Axis of Evil” since contacts have opened with Pyongyang and Tehran. The main distinction seems to be that you are allowed—but not obliged—to have diplomatic relations with an outpost of tyranny. (Oddly not included in the list is Azerbaijan, a hereditary despotism in many ways similar to Belarus that also has a rough way with opponents but possesses large oil and gas reserves.)

President Lukashenko, once the chief of a collective farm, has recently been seeking help with his image from a variety of British public-relations experts—notably Lord Tim Bell, who once worked for Margaret Thatcher. He has also consulted Patrick Robertson, who once did a little profile-polishing for the late General Pinochet. If these two wizards take on Lukashenko’s account, they may have some difficulties. Back in 1999, two of his principal opponents, Viktor Gonchar and Yuri Zakharenko, vanished from the

face of the earth. A journalist, Veronika Cherkasova, who rashly investigated Belarussian arms deals with Iraq, was found dead in her apartment in the capital, Minsk, in October 2004. She had been stabbed at least 40 times. A blade was still stuck in her chest, and bloodstains had been rather pointedly left on her address book. The police tried shamefully to blame members of her family. These are just samples. This is a genuinely frightening place.

Mikhail Marinich, a former colleague of Lukashenko who became an opponent, was absurdly charged with stealing computers from the U.S. embassy in Minsk. Even though the embassy pointed out emphatically that no computers had

in fact been stolen, Marinich was crammed into prison. Yuri Bandazhevsky, a scientist who attacked the state's response to the Chernobyl disaster—much of Belarus was badly contaminated by the explosion—was imprisoned on baseless corruption charges.

Joke elections planned for Sept. 28 have already led to casualties. Several people who dared to stand as independent candidates immediately lost their state-controlled jobs. And a mysterious explosion in the centre of Minsk—the number of dead and injured is unknown—provided the pretext for a general roundup and intimidation of anyone remotely critical.

Belarus still maintains its own KGB, which operates under that name and whose pillared ochre Stalinist headquarters dominates the center of the capital. During my visit, some brave and foolhardy person had scrawled the words

It is all very simple. Belarus is a bad country, sinister and dangerous, ruled by a man of doubtful sanity. And yet it is also not that simple. Visitors to Minsk, expecting a malodorous dump, find a startlingly clean, sylvan, and well-ordered city, a sort of idealized version of what the Soviet Union would have been like if it had worked. The buses are new. The main roads are smooth. The windows are washed. State-controlled shops are full of goods. The newspapers trumpet the fact that an average monthly salary can now buy three times as many potatoes as it did 13 years ago. (1,425 pounds, since you asked.) Potatoes are perhaps a more reliable measure than the country's shaky version of the ruble.

There are bowling alleys—something Lee Harvey Oswald greatly missed during his bizarre sojourn here as a worker in a radio factory in the early 1960s. "The work is drab," he wrote in

times long after customers have forgotten what they ordered. In this refreshing shelter from speed and urgency, a trio of musicians plays popular classical works in a continuing effort to raise the cultural standards of the masses. Workers in the banks will helpfully tell you (as they did in Soviet times) to go elsewhere to get a better exchange rate. Work is constantly ceasing for statutory breaks or audits (as it did in Soviet times). The terrifying gales of market capitalism have yet to come roaring down these placid streets. In the central bookshop, regiments of staff, whose equivalents would be unemployed in the West, stand about waiting for custom. Asked to supply a portrait of the president, they roll and wrap it with reverent care. Every retail outlet has its little corner devoted to a portrait of the president, just as Lenin was once honored in Communist times.

Oddly enough, these portraits provide the most undeniable proof that Belarus is a police state. The president's coiffure is one of those embarrassing ones in which strands of hair are unconvincingly persuaded across a naked dome. In a land with free media, he would long ago have been mocked into abandoning it. Yet there is no personality cult, rather an air of distance and mystery. There are no biographies of Lukashenko to be found anywhere, not even sycophantic ones, and he has yet to pen any grandiose theoretical volume.

In the picturesque countryside, where storks still nest in chimneys, there are neatly modernized small towns—the fruits of a serious effort to keep people on the land. It is often said that the curse of vodka is far less potent here than in Russia, where village life is generally lived in a haze of alcohol, with all the side effects you would expect. I made a special effort to find and talk to an ordinary citizen where there was little chance of surveillance or an arranged meeting. The

Continued on page 34

THE NEWSPAPERS TRUMPET THE FACT THAT AN **AVERAGE MONTHLY SALARY** CAN NOW **BUY THREE TIMES AS MANY POTATOES** AS IT DID 13 YEARS AGO.

"Stop Terror" in blue chalk on the sidewalk in front of the KGB's neoclassical portico. The clear implication was that the bomb was the work of the state's own security organs.

Lukashenko himself seems to be entering the stage of megalomania. He has taken to hoisting his four-year-old illegitimate son into the air in front of crowds at hockey games and proclaiming that the innocent, baffled child is his chosen heir. Since he has changed the constitution to make himself in effect president for life, such a North Korean succession is technically possible. Minsk is full of rumors about the doctor who is supposed to be Lukashenko's mistress. Meanwhile, the president's neglected wife toils as a milkmaid in rural obscurity.

his diary in 1959, as he sat in his surprisingly grand Minsk apartment block. "The money I get has nowhere to be spent. No nightclubs or bowling alleys, no places of recreation except the trade union dances. I have had enough." Soon afterward he re-defected to Texas. Thus the history of the world might have been changed by a few balls and skittles.

By contrast with every other ex-Communist capital, Minsk has not in general surrendered to the cult of Western brands. There are only two branches of McDonald's. There are no billboards for Western cosmetics or clothes, no Starbucks. The gangsterism and boomtown raffishness of Russia are also absent.

In the ornate restaurant of the Hotel Minsk, stately, unruffled staff ponderously serve ice cream and coffee, some-

Left Behind

The Aug. 16 forum at Rick Warren's Saddleback Church confirmed the role religion plays in the 2008 campaign: both major candidates felt compelled to appear at the

megachurch to answer uncomfortable questions. The event also served as a timely reminder that, come November, the evangelical vote will be just as Republican as in previous cycles.

This was not supposed to be an election dominated by culture-war questions. Foreign policy and economics were expected to drive the debate—or so left-wing commentators hoped. But theology proved to be a live wire for both parties throughout primary season. The campaign has been filled with disputes over religious identity politics, associations with controversial pastors, and the intersections of spiritual confession and Americanism. Far from dying out, the culture wars have blazed hotter than ever.

The Saddleback forum also demonstrated that the more expansive definition of Christian mission represented by a new generation of evangelical leaders does not necessarily come at the expense of social conservatism.

Warren, author of self-help bestseller *The Purpose Driven Life*, has enjoyed praise from liberal pundits on the assumption that his interest in combating poverty and disease implies an endorsement of government action. But for Warren, interest in conservation, social solidarity, and philanthropy need not translate into an embrace of federal intervention. Just the opposite. His higher profile on the political scene has reminded conservatives of a more fruitful and enduring means of moral and social regeneration than the broken model of party political engagement.

Activism on these issues, far from evidencing a drift to the Left, shows a broadening of evangelical interests. While Warren has called for expanding Christian duty, he has made clear in his statements—as he did in the wording of his questions to the candidates—that the old roster of social-conservative concerns holds. He regards protecting the unborn as “non-negotiable.”

The most telling response of the forum was Obama's answer to Warren's question about when a baby is “entitled to human rights.” Consistent with his pro-choice record and rhetorical habit of evading thorny issues, Obama said, “I think that whether you are looking at it from a theological perspective or a scientific perspective, answering that question with specificity... is above my pay grade.”

It is not surprising that pro-life Christians have been unimpressed by such feigned ignorance. But it is significant for the politics of abortion when adamantly pro-choice politicians publicly shrink from the logic of their own position. This may be an acknowledgement of the fact that the youngest cohort of voters is more Democratic-leaning but also more pro-life than their elders.

Democratic outreach to evangelicals has been growing over the past four years, as party leaders and their presidential nominee have courted pastors of the most well-known churches in the country. But despite lacing his rhetoric with biblical references and his campaign's efforts to organize Christian voters through groups such as Joshua Generation and Matthew 25, Obama

remains profoundly disadvantaged with white evangelical voters. No amount of social-gospel language will bridge substantial disagreements on public policy.

So uneasy is the relationship that Cameron Strang, a rising evangelical leader who founded *Relevant* magazine, backed out of his scheduled invocation at the Democratic National Convention for fear his presence might be “perceived as showing favoritism and ... endorsing one candidate.”

That's not to say evangelicals are as comfortable with this year's Republican nominee as they were with George W. Bush. McCain will never cite Jesus Christ as his favorite philosopher. And despite a reasonably consistent pro-life voting record, McCain has made a point of distancing himself from social conservatives and insulting some of their older leaders.

Still, Obama routinely polls some 45 points behind McCain among white evangelicals—worse even than John Kerry's draw of just one quarter of this key demographic. Having wisely taken a hands-off approach to Mike Huckabee during the primaries and avoiding further alienating evangelicals, McCain has now effectively solidified a critical bloc, thanks to Obama's weaknesses and the Religious Right's enduring attachment to the GOP.

And yet, while the Republican-evangelical alliance shows no sign of fracturing, the “new” evangelicals epitomized by Warren do portend a seismic shift in national politics—not in their partisan affiliation but in their growing disengagement from traditional party activism. Warren's forum showed why Republicans and evangelicals still work together politically, even as his emphasis on philanthropy and charity makes activist politics less important. ■

Appetite for Destruction

Never have so many shoppers owed so much ...

By Andrew J. Bacevich

NO LESS THAN IN 1776, a passion for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness remains at the center of America's civic theology. The Jeffersonian trinity summarizes our common inheritance, defines our aspirations, and provides the touchstone for our influence abroad.

Yet if Americans still cherish the sentiments contained in the Declaration of Independence, they have radically revised their understanding. For the majority of contemporary Americans, the essence of those "inalienable rights" centers on a relentless quest to acquire, to consume, to indulge, and to shed whatever constraints might interfere with those endeavors.

Others have bemoaned the cultural implications of this development. Few, however, have considered how an American preoccupation with "more" has affected U.S. relations with the rest of the world. Yet the foreign-policy implications of our self-indulgence are almost entirely negative. Over the past six decades, efforts to satisfy spiraling consumer demand have given birth to a condition of profound dependency. The ethic of self-gratification saddles us with costly commitments abroad that we are increasingly ill-equipped to sustain while confronting us with dangers to which we have no ready response. As the prerequisites of the American way of life have grown, they have outstripped the means to satisfy them.

The restless search for a buck and the ruthless elimination of anything standing in the way have long been central to the American character. Touring the United States in the 1830s, Alexis de

Tocqueville noted the "feverish ardor" of its citizens to accumulate. Yet even as the typical American "clutches at everything," the Frenchman wrote, "he holds nothing fast, but soon loosens his grasp to pursue fresh gratifications."

To quench their ardor, Americans looked abroad, seeking to extend the reach of U.S. power. The pursuit of fresh gratifications expressed itself collectively in an urge to expand territorially and commercially. This expansionist project was well begun when Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* appeared, most notably through Jefferson's acquisition of the Louisiana Territory and through ongoing efforts to remove (or simply eliminate) Native Americans.

Preferring to remember their story somewhat differently, Americans look to politicians to sanitize their past. When, in his 2005 inaugural address, George W. Bush identified the promulgation of freedom as "the mission that created our nation," neoconservative hearts beat a little faster, as they did when he went on to declare that America's "great liberating tradition" now required the U.S. to devote itself to "ending tyranny in our world." But Bush was simply putting his own gloss on a time-honored conviction ascribing to the United States a uniqueness of character and purpose. From its founding, America has expressed through its behavior a providential purpose. Renewing this tradition of American exceptionalism has long been one of the presidency's primary extraconstitutional obligations.

Yet to credit the United States with possessing a liberating tradition is equivalent to saying that Hollywood has a "tradition of artistic excellence." The movie business is just that—a business. If a studio occasionally produces a film of aesthetic value, that may be cause for celebration, but profit, not revealing truth and beauty, defines the purpose of the enterprise.

The same can be said of the enterprise launched on July 4, 1776. The hard-headed lawyers, merchants, farmers, and plantation owners gathered in Philadelphia did not set out to create a church. They founded a republic. Their purpose was not to save mankind. It was to ensure that people like themselves enjoyed unencumbered access to the Jeffersonian trinity.

In the years that followed, the U.S. achieved remarkable success in making good on those aims. But never during the course of America's transformation from a small power to a great one did the United States exert itself to liberate others absent an overriding perception that the nation had security or economic interests at stake. From time to time, although not nearly as frequently as we like to imagine, some of the world's unfortunates managed as a consequence to escape from bondage. The Civil War did produce emancipation. Yet to explain the conflagration as a response to the plight of enslaved African-Americans is to engage in immense oversimplification. Near the end of World War II, GI's did liberate the surviving inmates of Nazi death camps. Yet for those who directed the American war effort, the

fate of European Jews never figured as more than an afterthought.

Crediting the United States with a great liberating tradition distorts the past and obscures the motive behind U.S. foreign policy. To insist that the liberation of others has never been more than an ancillary motive of U.S. policy is not cynicism; it is a prerequisite to self-understanding

If the young United States had a mission, it was not to liberate but to expand. "Of course," declared Theodore Roosevelt in 1899, "our whole national history has been one of expansion." TR spoke truthfully. The founders viewed stasis as tantamount to suicide. From the outset, Americans evinced a compulsion to acquire territory and extend their commercial reach.

Depending on the circumstances, the U.S. relied on diplomacy, hard bargaining, bluster, chicanery, intimidation, or naked coercion. We infiltrated land belonging to our neighbors and proclaimed it our own. We harassed, filibustered, and launched full-scale invasions. We engaged in ethnic cleansing. At times, we insisted that treaties be considered sacrosanct. On other occasions, we jettisoned agreements that had outlived their usefulness.

As the methods varied, so did the rationales. We touted our status as God's new Chosen People, erecting a "city upon a hill" to illuminate the world. We acted at the behest of providential guidance or responded to the urgings of our "manifest destiny." We declared our obligation to spread the Gospel or to "uplift little brown brother." With Woodrow Wilson as our tutor, we shouldered our responsibility to "show the way to the nations of the world how they shall walk in the paths of liberty." Critics who derided these claims as bunkum—the young Lincoln during the war with Mexico, Mark Twain after the imperial adventures of 1898, Sen. Robert La Follette amid "the

war to end all wars"—scored points but lost the argument. Periodically revised and refurbished, American exceptionalism only gained currency.

From expansion came abundance. Out of abundance came substantive freedom. Documents drafted in Philadelphia promised liberty. Making good on those promises required a political economy that facilitated the creation of wealth on an enormous scale.

Writing over a century ago, historian Frederick Jackson Turner made the essential point. "Not the Constitution, but free land and an abundance of natural resources open to a fit people," he wrote, made American democracy possible. William Appleman Williams found an even tighter correlation. For Americans, he observed, "abundance was freedom and freedom was abundance."

In short, expansion fostered prosperity, which in turn created the environment within which Americans pursued their dreams of freedom even as they argued about just who deserved to share in that dream. The promise—and reality—of ever-increasing material abundance kept that argument within bounds. As the Industrial Revolution took hold, Americans came to count on an ever larger economic pie to anesthetize the unruly and ameliorate tensions related to class, race, religion, and ethnicity. Money became the preferred lubricant for keeping social and political friction within tolerable limits. Americans, Reinhold Niebuhr observed, "seek a solution for practically every problem of life in quantitative terms," certain that more is better.

This relationship between expansion, abundance, and freedom reached its apotheosis in the aftermath of World War II. Assisted by the fratricidal behavior of the European powers and reckless Japanese policies that culminated in the attack on Pearl Harbor, the U.S. emerged as a global superpower, while the American people came to enjoy a

standard of living that made them the envy of the world. By 1945, the "American Century" forecast by Henry Luce only four years earlier seemed miraculously at hand. The United States was the strongest, the richest, and—in the eyes of its white majority at least—the freest nation in the world.

It possessed nearly two-thirds of the world's gold reserves and more than half its manufacturing capacity. As measured by value, its exports more than doubled its imports. The dollar had displaced the British pound sterling as the global reserve currency, making the United States the world's money manager. Among the world's producers of oil, steel, airplanes, automobiles, and electronics, it ranked first.

Militarily, the United States possessed unquestioned naval and air supremacy, underscored until August 1949 by an absolute nuclear monopoly, affirmed thereafter by an indisputable edge in military technology. Immediate neighbors were weak and posed no threat. Adversaries were far away and possessed limited reach.

The two decades following World War II marked the zenith of what historian Charles Maier called the Empire of Production. Unquestioned economic superiority endowed the United States with a high level of strategic self-sufficiency, translating into remarkable freedom of action. In his Farewell Address, George Washington dreamed of the day when the U.S. might acquire strength sufficient "to give it, humanly speaking, the command of its own fortunes." Strength, the first president believed, would allow the nation to assert real independence, enabling Americans to "choose peace or war, as our interest, guided by justice, shall counsel." In the wake of World War II, that moment had emphatically arrived.

It soon passed. Even before 1950, the United States had begun to import foreign oil. At first, the quantities were tri-

fling. Over time, they grew. Yet the U.S. continued churning out a never-ending array of goods, its preeminence seemingly beyond challenge.

In the 1960s, however, the empire of production began to come undone. Within another 20 years—thanks to permanently negative trade balances, a crushing defeat in Vietnam, oil shocks, stagflation, the shredding of a moral consensus that could not withstand the assaults of Elvis Presley, “the pill,” and the counterculture, along with news reports that God had died—it had become defunct. In its place, according to Maier, there emerged a new Empire of Consumption. Just as the lunchbucket-toting factory worker has symbolized the empire of production in its heyday, the teenager, daddy’s credit card in her blue jeans and headed to the mall, now emerged as the empire of consumption’s emblematic figure.

We can fix the tipping point with precision. Prior to the Vietnam War, efforts to expand American power to promote American abundance usually proved conducive to American freedom. After Vietnam, efforts to expand American power continued; but when it came to either abundance or freedom, the results became increasingly problematic.

In retrospect, the economic indicators signaling an erosion of dominance seem obvious. The costs of the Vietnam War—and President Johnson’s attempt to conceal them while pursuing his vision of a Great Society—destabilized the economy, as evidenced by deficits, inflation, and a weakening dollar. In August 1971, Nixon tacitly acknowledged the disarray by devaluing the dollar and suspending its convertibility into gold.

That was only the beginning. Prior to the 1970s, because the U.S. had long been the world’s producer of petroleum, American oil companies determined the global price of oil. In 1972, domestic pro-

duction peaked and began its irreversible decline. The year before, the prerogative of setting the price of crude had passed to a new producer’s group, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries.

With U.S. demand for oil steadily increasing, so did reliance on imports. In 1971, after decades in the black, the United States had a negative trade balance. In 1973, and again in 1975, exports exceeded imports in value. From then on, it was all red ink; never again would American exports equal imports.

By the late 1970s, a period of slow growth and high inflation, the still-forming crisis of profligacy was already causing distress. The first protracted economic downturn since World War II confronted Americans with a fundamental choice. They could curb their appetites and learn to live within their means or deploy dwindling reserves of U.S. power in hopes of obliging others to accommodate their penchant for conspicuous consumption. They opted for the latter.

Here lies the true pivot of contemporary American history, far more relevant to our present predicament than events like the fall of the Berlin Wall or the collapse of the Soviet Union. Between the summer of 1979 and the spring of 1983, “global leadership,” the signature claim of U.S. foreign policy, underwent a subtle transformation. Although the United States kept up the pretense that the rest of the world could not manage without its guidance and protection, leadership became less a choice than an imperative. The exercise of global primacy offered a way of compensating for the erosion of dominant economic position. Yet whatever deference Washington was able to command could not conceal the extent to which the U.S. was becoming beholden to others.

On July 15, 1979, Jimmy Carter delivered the first of two pivotal speeches. Although widely regarded as a failed

president, Carter, in this instance at least, demonstrated remarkable foresight. He not only appreciated the looming implications of dependence but anticipated the implications of allowing this condition to fester.

In the summer of 1979, inflation had reached 11 percent, 7 percent of American workers were unemployed, and the prime lending rate stood at 15 percent and was still rising. Worse yet, in January, Iranian revolutionaries ousted the shah, resulting in a second “oil shock.” If Carter hoped to win a second term, he needed to turn things around quickly.

The president had originally intended to speak on July 5, focusing his address exclusively on energy. At the last minute, he decided to postpone it. Instead, he spent ten days sequestered at Camp David, using the time “to reach out and listen to the voices of America.” The speech he delivered bore little resemblance to the one he had planned to give ten days earlier. The energy crisis, he suggested, was a symptom of a far greater crisis: “I want to speak to you first tonight about a subject even more serious than energy or inflation. I want to talk to you right now about a fundamental threat to American democracy.”

Carter then proceeded to kill any chance of re-election. In American political discourse, fundamental threats are by definition external. Nazi Germany, imperial Japan, or international communism could threaten the United States. That very year, Iran’s Islamic revolutionaries had emerged to pose another such threat. That the actions of everyday Americans might pose a comparable threat amounted to heresy. Yet Carter dared to suggest that the real danger to American democracy lay within.

The nation was experiencing “a crisis of confidence,” he announced. “It is a crisis that strikes at the very heart and soul and spirit of our national will. We can see this crisis in the growing doubt

about the meaning of our own lives and in the loss of a unity of purpose for our nation." This erosion of confidence threatened "to destroy the social and the political fabric of America."

Americans had strayed from the path of righteousness. "In a nation that was proud of hard work, strong families, close-knit communities, and our faith in God," the president continued,

too many of us now tend to worship self-indulgence and consumption. Human identity is no longer defined by what one does, but by what one owns. But we've discovered that owning things and consuming things does not satisfy our longing for meaning. We've learned that piling up material goods cannot fill the emptiness of lives which have no confidence or purpose.

The American crisis of confidence was an outward manifestation of an underlying crisis of values. Carter implied that he was merely voicing concerns that his listeners already shared: that average Americans viewed their lives as unsatisfying rituals of buying and longed for something more meaningful.

"We are at a turning point in our history," Carter announced.

There are two paths to choose. One is a path I've warned about tonight, the path that leads to fragmentation and self-interest. Down that road lies a mistaken idea of freedom, the right to grasp for ourselves some advantage over others. That path would be one of constant conflict between narrow interests ending in chaos and immobility.

The continued pursuit of this idea of freedom was "a certain route to failure." The alternative—a course consistent with "all the traditions of our past [and] all the lessons of our heritage"—pointed

down "another path, the path of common purpose and the restoration of American values."

As portrayed by Carter, the mistaken idea of freedom was quantitative: it centered on the never-ending quest for more while exalting narrow self-interest. His conception of authentic freedom was qualitative: it meant living in accordance with permanent values. At least by implication, it meant settling for less.

How Americans dealt with the question of energy, the president believed, would determine which idea of freedom would prevail. With this in mind, Carter outlined a six-point program designed to end what he called "this intolerable dependence on foreign oil." Although he expressed confidence that the United States could one day regain energy independence, he acknowledged that in the near term "there [was] simply no way to avoid sacrifice." Implicit in Carter's speech was the suggestion that sacrifice just might be a good thing. For the sinner, penance must necessarily precede redemption.

As an effort to reorient public policy, Carter's appeal failed completely. Americans showed little enthusiasm for the president's brand of freedom with its connotations of virtuous austerity. Not liking the message, Americans shot the messenger.

Carter's speech did enjoy a long and fruitful life—chiefly as fodder for his political opponents. The most formidable was Ronald Reagan. He portrayed himself as conservative but was, in fact, the modern prophet of profligacy—the politician who gave moral sanction to the empire of consumption. Beguiling his fellow citizens with talk of "morning in America," Reagan added to America's civic religion two crucial beliefs: credit has no limits, and the bills will never come due. Balance the books, pay as you go, save for a rainy day—Reagan's abrogation of these ancient bits of folk

wisdom did as much to recast America's moral constitution as did sex, drugs, and rock and roll.

When it came to confidence, the former governor wanted it known that he had lots of it. In a jab at Carter, he alluded to those "who would have us believe that the United States, like other great civilizations of the past, has reached the zenith of its power" and who "tell us we must learn to live with less." Reagan rejected these propositions. He envisioned a future in which the U.S. would gain even greater power while Americans would enjoy ever greater prosperity. The sole obstacle was the federal government. His solution was to pare down the bureaucracy, reduce federal spending, and cut taxes.

On one point at least, Reagan agreed with Carter: "The only way to free ourselves from the monopoly pricing power of OPEC is to be less dependent on outside sources of fuel." Yet Reagan had no interest in promoting energy independence through reduced consumption. When it came to energy, he was insistent: "We must decide that 'less' is not enough."

History remembers Reagan as a fervent Cold Warrior. Yet, in announcing his candidacy, he devoted little attention to the Soviet Union. His language was measured, not belligerent. He did not denounce the Soviets for being "evil." He made no allusions to rolling back communism. In outlining his views on foreign policy, he focused on his vision of a "North American accord," an economic union linking the United States, Canada, and Mexico.

He approvingly quoted Tom Paine on Americans having the power to "begin the world over again." He endorsed John Winthrop's charge that God had commanded Americans to erect "a city upon a hill." And he cited (without attribution) Franklin D. Roosevelt's entreaty for Americans to keep their "rendezvous with destiny." Reagan did not call on

Americans to tighten their belts. He saw no need for sacrifice. He rejected Carter's dichotomy between quantity and quality. Above all, he assured his countrymen that they could have more.

Despite the advantages of incumbency, Carter suffered a crushing defeat. Reagan carried all but four states and won the popular vote by well over eight million. It was a landslide and a portent.

Reagan's inaugural address served as an occasion to recite conservative bromides. He made a show of decrying the profligacy of the recent past: "For decades we have piled deficit upon deficit, mortgaging our future and our children's future for the temporary convenience of the present. To continue this long trend is to guarantee tremendous social, cultural, political, and economic upheavals." He vowed to put America's economic house in order: "You and I, as individuals, can, by borrowing, live beyond our means, but for only a limited period of time. Why, then, should we think that collectively, as a nation, we're not bound by that same limitation?" Reagan reiterated an oft-made promise "to check and reverse the growth of government."

He would do none of these things. In each case, he did just the reverse. During the Carter years, the federal deficit had averaged \$54.5 billion annually. During the Reagan era, deficits skyrocketed, averaging \$210.6 billion over the course of Reagan's two terms. Federal spending nearly doubled, from \$590.9 billion in 1980 to \$1.14 trillion in 1989. The federal government did not shrink. It grew, the bureaucracy swelling by nearly 5 percent.

To call Reagan a hypocrite is to miss the point. The Reagan Revolution was never about fiscal responsibility or small government. Far more accurately than Carter, Reagan understood what made Americans tick: they wanted self-gratification, not self-denial. Although always

careful to embroider his speeches with inspirational homilies and testimonials to old-fashioned virtues, Reagan mainly indulged American self-indulgence.

There was a revolution; it just had little to do with the tenets of conservatism. The true nature of the revolution becomes apparent only in retrospect. Reagan unveiled it in remarks that he made on March 23, 1983. History remembers this as the occasion when the president announced his Strategic Defense Initiative. Embedded in Reagan's remarks were two radical propositions: the minimum requirements of U.S. security required a status akin to invulnerability and modern technology was bringing this utopian goal within reach. Star Wars introduced into mainstream politics the proposition that Americans could be safe only if the United States enjoyed permanent global military supremacy. Here was Reagan's preferred response to the crisis that Carter had identified. Here, too, can be found the strategic underpinnings of George W. Bush's global war on terror.

Whereas Carter had summoned Americans to mend their ways, Reagan obviated any need for soul-searching by inviting his fellow citizens to carry on. For Carter, ending American dependence on foreign oil meant promoting moral renewal at home. Reagan—and Reagan's successors—mimicked Carter in bemoaning the nation's growing energy dependence but did next to nothing to curtail that dependence. Instead, they wielded U.S. military power to ensure access to oil, hoping thereby to prolong the empire of consumption. Carter had portrayed quantity (the American preoccupation with what he had called "piling up material goods") as fundamentally at odds with quality (authentic freedom as he defined it). Reagan reconciled what was, to Carter, increasingly irreconcilable. In Reagan's view, quality (advanced technology converted to military use by highly skilled

soldiers) could sustain quantity (a consumer economy based on the availability of cheap credit and cheap oil).

A consensus emerged based on the conviction that the American military could dominate the planet as Reagan had proposed to dominate outer space. In Washington, confidence that a high-quality military establishment, dexterously employed, could enable the U.S., always with high-minded intentions, to organize the world to its liking became a self-evident truth. In this malignant expectation—not in any of the conservative ideals for which he is retrospectively venerated—lies the essence of the Reagan legacy.

By the end of his presidency, 41 percent of the oil consumed domestically came from abroad. It was during his first term that growing demand for Chinese goods produced the first negative trade balance with that country. In the same period, Washington—and the American people more generally—resorted to borrowing. The U.S. had long touted its status as a creditor nation as a symbol of overall economic strength. That, too, ended during the Reagan era. Even as the United States began accumulating trillions of dollars of debt, the inclination of individual Americans to save began to disappear. For most of the postwar era, personal savings had averaged a robust 8-10 percent of disposable income. In 1985, that figure began a slide toward zero.

American profligacy during the 1980s had a powerful effect on foreign policy. On one hand, Reagan's willingness to spend without limit helped bring the Cold War to a peaceful conclusion. On the other, American habits of conspicuous consumption drew the U.S. ever more deeply into the vortex of the Islamic world, saddling an increasingly debt-ridden and energy-dependent nation with commitments it could neither shed nor sustain.

Yet it would be a mistake to imply that there were two Reagans—the farsighted statesman who won the Cold War and the chucklehead who bollixed up U.S. relations with the Islamic world. Cold War policy and Middle Eastern policy did not exist in separate compartments. Reagan-era exertions undertaken to win “World War III” inadvertently paved the way for “World War IV,” while leaving the United States in an appreciably weaker position to conduct that struggle.

Reagan never questioned the proposition that the American way of life required ever larger quantities of energy. Since satisfying American demand by expanding domestic oil production was never anything but a mirage, Reagan instead crafted policies to alleviate the risks associated with dependency. The splendid army he helped create found eventual employment not in defending the West against totalitarianism but in trying to impose an American imperium on the Persian Gulf.

RATHER THAN ASKING AMERICANS TO TRIM THEIR APPETITE FOR LUXURIES, BUSH CALLED ON THEM TO CARRY ON AS IF NOTHING HAD OCCURRED.

Whatever their professed ideological allegiance, Reagan’s successors have all adhered to the hallowed tradition of decrying America’s energy dependence without taking any meaningful action to address this addiction. That Americans might shake the habit by choosing a different course is a possibility few are willing to contemplate. After all, as George H.W. Bush declared in 1992, “The American way of life is not negotiable.”

The presidents who followed have relied increasingly on military power to sustain that way of life. The unspoken assumption has been that profligate spending on what politicians euphemistically refer to as “defense” can sustain profligate domestic consumption of

energy and imported manufactures. That the antidote to our ailments might lie within rather than on the other side of the world received no consideration at all.

The events of Sept. 11, 2001 only hardened this disposition. Donald Rumsfeld summarized the prevailing view: “We have two choices. Either we change the way we live, or we must change the way they live. We choose the latter.”

As it trained its sights on modifying the way “they” lived, the Bush administration looked to America’s Armed Forces as its agent of change. Through a war of liberation, the United States intended to convert Iraq into what Paul Wolfowitz termed the first Arab democracy. Yet, as they prepared for a showdown with Saddam, Wolfowitz and others in the administration were looking beyond Baghdad. Iraq only qualified as an interim objective. The ultimate purpose was to transform a huge swath of the Islamic world from Morocco through Pakistan and Central Asia to Indonesia and the

southern Philippines. Here was an imperial vision on a colossal scale, a worthy successor to older claims of “manifest destiny” or an American mission to “make the world safe for democracy.”

One might have thought that implementing such a vision would require sustained and large-scale national commitment. “War costs money,” Franklin D. Roosevelt reminded his countrymen after Pearl Harbor. “That means taxes and bonds and bonds and taxes. It means cutting luxuries and other non-essentials.” At the outset of its war on terrorism, the Bush administration saw things differently. Even as the U.S. embarked on a global conflict expected to last decades, the president reduced taxes.

Rather than asking Americans to trim their appetite for luxuries, he called on them to carry on as if nothing had occurred. Barely two weeks after the World Trade Center collapsed, the president was prodding citizens to “Fly and enjoy America’s great destination spots. Get down to Disney World in Florida.” As late as December 2006, with the situation in Iraq looking grim, the wartime president noted with satisfaction that the holiday spending binge was off to “a strong beginning.” Yet he summoned Americans to make even greater exertions: “I encourage you all to go shopping more.”

The role allotted to the American people was to pretend that the conflict did not exist. Despite claims that his would be a generational struggle, the president never considered restoring the draft. Nor did he expand the size of the Armed Forces. This guaranteed that the 0.5 percent of the population that made up the all-volunteer force would bear the brunt of any sacrifice. With only a handful of dissenters, the remaining 99.5 percent of Americans happily endorsed this distribution of effort.

Predictably, as the scope of military operations grew, so did the level of military spending. During the Bush years, the Pentagon’s budget more than doubled, reaching \$700 billion by 2008. Unlike in Operation Desert Storm when Germany, Japan, and friendly Gulf states ponied up tens of billions, the burden fell entirely on Washington.

Less predictably, although perhaps not surprisingly, spending on entitlements also rose in the years after 9/11. Abetted by Congress, the administration conducted a war of guns and butter, including huge increases in Medicare and Social Security. The federal budget went into the red and stayed there.

In the name of preserving the American way of life, President Bush and his lieutenants committed the nation to a breathtakingly ambitious project of near global

domination. Hewing to a tradition that extended at least as far back as Jefferson, they intended to expand American power to further the cause of American freedom. Freedom assumed abundance. Abundance seemingly required access to cheap and abundant oil. Guaranteeing access to that oil demanded that the U.S. remove all doubts about who called the shots in the Persian Gulf.

Yet that way of life, based for at least two generations on an ethic of excess, drastically reduced the resources available for such an all-encompassing imperial enterprise. Encouraged by President Bush to attend to their personal priorities, Americans lost no time disengaging from the war he had launched. While soldiers fought, people consumed. With the United States possessing less than 3 percent of the world's known oil reserves and Americans burning one out of every four barrels of petroleum produced worldwide, oil imports reached 60 percent of daily national requirements and kept rising. The personal-savings rate continued to plummet. In 2006, total public debt topped \$9 trillion, nearly 70 percent of the gross national product.

In February of that year, a provocative article in the *New York Times Magazine* posed the question, "Is freedom just another word for many things to buy?" Through their actions after 9/11, as before, tens of millions of Americans answered in the affirmative. Given the extent to which consumption had become the driveshaft of the global economy, the Bush administration welcomed the average citizen's inclination to ignore the war and return to the mall.

Yet once the Iraq War demonstrated the shortcomings of shock and awe, there was no obvious way to reconfigure the empire of consumption into an empire of global liberation. The horrors of Sept. 11 notwithstanding, most Americans subscribed to a limited-liability version of patriotism, one that empha-

sized the display of bumper stickers in preference to shouldering a rucksack.

As conditions in Iraq worsened, the disparity between pretensions and capacities became painfully evident. A generation of profligacy had produced strategic insolvency. The administration had counted on the qualitative superiority of U.S. forces compensating for their limited numbers. The enemy did not cooperate. And although the United States is a wealthy nation with a population of over 300 million, closing the gap between means and ends posed a daunting task. By February 2005, Max Boot was suggesting that the armed forces "open up recruiting stations from Budapest to Bangkok, Cape Town to Cairo, Montreal to Mexico City."

The United States had a shortage of soldiers; it also lacked funds. The longer the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan raged, the more costly they became. By 2007, to sustain its operations the U.S. command in Baghdad was burning through \$3 billion per week. That same year, the overall costs of the Iraq War topped the \$500 billion mark, with some estimates suggesting that the final bill could reach \$2 trillion.

Although these figures were widely reported, they had almost no political impact in Washington, indicating the extent to which habits of profligacy had become entrenched. Congress responded to budget imbalances not by trimming spending or increasing revenues but by raising the debt ceiling by \$3.015 trillion between 2002 and 2006. Future generations could figure out how to pay the bills.

All this red ink finally began to generate nervous speculation about a coming economic collapse comparable in magnitude to the Great Depression. Americans continued to insist, however, that the remedy to the nation's problems lay in the Persian Gulf rather than at home. The slightest suggestion that the United

States ought to worry less about matters abroad and more about setting its own house in order elicited from the political elite shrieks of "isolationism," the great imaginary sin to which Americans are allegedly prone. Yet beginning to put our house in order would be to open up a whole new array of options, once again permitting the United States to "choose peace or war, as our interest, guided by justice, shall counsel."

Long accustomed to thinking of the U.S. as a superpower, Americans have yet to realize that they have forfeited command of their own destiny. The reciprocal relationship between expansionism, abundance, and freedom—each reinforcing the other—no longer exists. If anything, the reverse is true: expansionism squanders American wealth and power, while putting freedom at risk. As a consequence, the strategic tradition to which Jefferson and Polk, Lincoln and McKinley, TR and FDR all subscribed has been rendered not only obsolete but pernicious.

Rather than confronting this reality, American grand strategy since the era of Reagan, and especially throughout the era of George W. Bush, has been characterized by attempts to wish reality away. Policy-makers have been engaged in a de facto Ponzi scheme intended to extend indefinitely the American line of credit. The fiasco of the Iraq War and the quasi-permanent U.S. occupation of Afghanistan illustrate the results and prefigure what is yet to come if the crisis of American profligacy continues unabated. ■

Andrew J. Bacevich teaches international relations at Boston University. This essay is adapted from The Limits of Power: The End of American Exceptionalism by Andrew J. Bacevich. Reprinted by arrangement with Metropolitan Books, an imprint of Henry Holt and Company, LLC. Copyright © 2008 by Andrew J. Bacevich. All rights reserved.

A New Musharraf in Town

As America's vassal general steps down, Pakistan faces an uncertain future.

By Eric S. Margolis

MOST PAKISTANIS hailed the Aug. 18 resignation of the nation's widely despised president and former military dictator, Pervez Musharraf. But his long-expected departure comes as Pakistan plunges ever deeper into political uncertainty and rising violence.

The United States has an unhappy record of using pliant monarchs, generals, and dictators. For examples, one need only think back to the Shah of Iran or Egypt's Anwar Sadat. In both cases, Washington arm-twisted or bribed these rulers into pursuing policies that were violently opposed by their people. Après these despots, the déluge: Iran's anti-American Islamic revolution and the birth of the Egyptian arm of al-Qaeda. Now it's Pakistan's turn.

I interviewed Gen. Pervez Musharraf when he first came to power in a 1999 military coup that overthrew Pakistan's unpopular prime minister, Nawaz Sharif. Having known every Pakistani leader since the very tough President Zia ul-Haq in the mid 1980s, I was interested to meet Musharraf. To my dismay, I found him a small, sour man who seemed to lack the qualifications, intellect, or strength to lead maddeningly complex, unstable Pakistan.

The 9/11 attacks on the U.S. transformed Musharraf from a minor figure into one of our key allies and a leading enforcer of the American Raj. Pakistan's then director of intelligence, Gen. Mahmud Ahmad, told me the Bush administration gave an ultimatum to Islamabad: open your bases to us; give us use of your army and intelligence service; and abandon Pakistan's old ally the Taliban or face being bombed back to the

Stone Age. Musharraf confirms this story in his autobiography.

Musharraf caved in to U.S. demands with unseemly haste. Pakistan quickly became the primary base for the American invasion of Afghanistan and its ensuing war against its southern Pashtun tribes collectively known as the Taliban. In fact, without the use of three secret airbases in Pakistan and supply depots that provide 80 percent of the fuel and heavy war materiel for U.S.-led forces in Afghanistan, as well as deployment of 120,000 Pakistani troops along the border, the Western powers would not be able to sustain their occupation of Afghanistan.

Washington compelled Musharraf to use his armed forces to attack pro-Taliban Pashtun tribesmen in Pakistan's autonomous Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). These attacks, in which 3,000 Pakistani civilians and 1,000 soldiers died, outraged Pakistanis and generated fierce anti-Americanism. Musharraf was widely denounced as a traitor and Washington's stooge for using his army to assist America's war in Afghanistan while abandoning the struggle to "liberate" Indian-ruled Kashmir, where renewed violence has recently surged. The Indian-Pakistani confrontation over Kashmir remains the world's most dangerous nuclear threat.

But \$12 billion of payments to Musharraf's regime from Washington, and at least as much in secret CIA stipends to senior Pakistani officers, politicians, and media, rented co-operation, at least until this year when time ran out for the isolated Musharraf and the U.S. cut him adrift.

Now even the most astute fortune-tellers in the Peshawar bazaar cannot decipher what comes next for Pakistan. Inflation is running at 25 percent. The unnatural coalition formed by the two leading parties, Asif Ali Zardari's People's Party and Nawaz Sharif's Muslim League-N, broke up in the third week of August. It was doomed from the start, rent by bitter rivalries between their leaders, basic differences over military operations in FATA, and restoration of the judiciary, which Musharraf purged with Washington's approval.

Zardari, the widower of Benazir Bhutto, who was killed last December, says he will stand for president in a Sept. 6 vote. But what kind of president remains uncertain. Nawaz Sharif wants to become prime minister again, but with a ceremonial president. Zardari wants to be an all-powerful chief executive.

Many Pakistanis, including, ominously, the military brass, do not want to see the flamboyant Zardari, long known as "Mr. Ten Percent," as their nation's leader. Serious allegations of corruption continue to dog him, though he claims all are politically motivated. Swiss magistrates were investigating Zardari for kickbacks paid by Swiss firms but recently dropped the charges. His large foreign property holdings and the questionable dealings of his relatives also hurt his image. But Washington is likely to back Zardari.

Benazir Bhutto's 19-year-old son Bilawal is being groomed for People's Party leadership, which the Bhuttos consider their family fiefdom. I met Bilawal in London with Benazir shortly before she left on her ill-fated return to

Pakistan. He is bright and mature, but not yet ready for a senior position.

Former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif would seem a more seasoned leader, but he is also haunted by corruption and cronyism charges. He too claims they were cooked up by his enemies. But more important, Nawaz is not liked in Washington. He is regarded as too independent-minded, averse to continuing the war in FATA and Afghanistan, and is considered too "Islamist"—which he is not. Sharif returns the bad feelings, having been humiliated in 1999 by the Clinton administration and prevented from returning to Pakistan by the Bush White House.

If Zardari and Sharif cannot forge a working compromise, if Pakistan falls into political paralysis and chaos, all eyes will then turn to the only national institution that still works: the 650,000-man armed forces.

The general who replaced Musharraf as commander in chief, Gen. Afshaq Kayani, is a respected professional. My sources say he was selected by Washington 18 months ago as a replacement for the faltering Musharraf. The U.S. needs a compliant ally in Islamabad pursuing the war in Afghanistan. But no one knows what the dour, enigmatic general is thinking. So far, he has been trying to shake off the military's negative image from the Musharraf era and keep the armed forces scrupulously out of politics. He is believed to favor pursuing Islamabad's war in the tribal areas.

Throw into this steaming stew India's attempts to dominate Afghanistan: the inexorable spread of the Afghan war into Pakistan; violent unrest in the Northwest Frontier, FATA, and Baluchistan; and Iranian intrigues among Pakistan's Shia minority.

Add the very worrying threats by the Bush administration to intervene militarily in FATA, a foolhardy act that would get the U.S. stuck in an ever-widening guerrilla war in Pakistan, a

nation of 165 million. Even more dangerous, neocons are now clamoring for an attack to destroy Pakistan's heavily guarded, well-dispersed nuclear arsenal.

America does not need, nor can it handle, any more foes. We should remember that a key component of Osama bin Laden's so far successful strategy for expelling U.S. power from the Muslim world has been to drag it into a war in Pakistan, where anti-American feeling is incandescent. Yet Washington

blunders on, supporting dictatorship while ignoring democratic, popular forces. The White House has become so obsessed with the unwinnable war in Afghanistan that it cannot see that faithful old ally Pakistan is turning into a cauldron of anti-Western hatred and jihadism. ■

Eric S. Margolis is the author of War at the Top of the World: The Struggle for Afghanistan and Asia, and a columnist, commentator, and war correspondent.

Radical Chic

Why liberals love Tibet

By Brendan O'Neill

WHENEVER A PROTESTER wins the fulsome praise of politicians, the media, and especially the radical's own mother and father, I get suspicious.

In 1993, as an angry 19-year-old, I marched against police racism in East London, coming nose-to-nose with truncheon-wielding, hot-blooded coppers. In 1994, I joined an irate throng outside the American Embassy in London to register my opposition to Clinton's invasion of Haiti. I also marched against NATO's bombing of the Bosnian Serbs in 1995, its air assault on Yugoslavia in 1999, and its invasion of Afghanistan in 2001. Not once did I receive a pat on the back from a politician or sycophantic coverage in a sympathetic broadsheet. As for my parents, they thought I was certifiably off my rocker.

How different it has been for Lucy Fairbrother, the British 23-year-old Free Tibet protester who was deported from Beijing after hanging a banner reading "Tibet will be free" outside the Bird's Nest stadium. On Aug. 6, two days before the Olympic Games kicked off, Fairbrother

and three other Free Tibet activists scaled 120-foot-tall lighting poles close to the stadium and unfurled their banner for the clicking cameras of the world media. Overnight, Lucy—the daughter of a former director of Barings Bank—was transformed into a plucky hero. Upon her arrival at London City Airport, she was snapped by swarms of paparazzi and asked for her views on the future of China and Tibet. Her grinning mug shot graced the pages of every newspaper the following day, where she was described as "brave," "committed," and the "best of British." Her mother beamed with pride. "I'm so proud of her. She is doing what she feels is right, and what I feel is right," she declared. Normally, parental approval would sound the death knell to the career of any self-respecting protester, yet in the Tale of Lucy Fairbrother, her mother's voice merely joined the deafening chorus of approval.

This should confirm that there is nothing remotely radical, much less progressive, about jumping on the Free Tibet bandwagon. Instead, yelling "Free

Tibet!" from the top of a pole in Beijing or outside the Chinese Embassy in London, where Free Tibet activists gather every day, will win you a round of applause from bankers, editors, and even Prince Charles, a supporter of the Tibet cause who is reportedly impressed by the Fairbrother girl.

"Free Tibet" has become the cry of the backward and the reactionary. Across the West, it has been turned into the pet cause of poor little rich girls (and boys) who feel disillusioned with modernity and cynical about China and for whom Tibet has become a mystical playground that must be protected from the evil forces of progress.

Though the campaign has the word "free" in its title, the Free Tibet lobby has little to say about political freedom in Tibet. It rarely demands that Tibetans be granted the right to vote or organize their own protests. Instead, it focuses on protecting the "cultural integrity" of Tibet and the religious freedom of its Buddhist monks. Students for a Free Tibet, an international group of which Lucy Fairbrother is a member, frets that Chinese development in Tibet—including its "extraction of natural resources" and its "large-scale infrastructure projects"—will "erase existing socio-cultural and political divisions between China [and Tibet]." Tellingly, activists refer to China's presence in Tibet as a form of "cultural genocide," where the alleged hampering of ancient practices, rather than the denial of democratic rights, is the real crime. This is a campaign not for political self-determination for the people of Tibet but for the protection of a cultural entity imagined and reified by Western activists. It is about maintaining Tibet in a time warp for the benefit of protesters cum eco-tourists.

The essentially narcissistic focus of Free Tibet campaigners is revealed in their two main obsessions: passionate opposition to China's modernization of

the Himalayan kingdom and outrage that Beijing will not allow the Dalai Lama to return and assume his "rightful" position as Tibet's leader.

Free Tibet activists expend much of their energy campaigning against anything that smells modern—especially Chinese jobs, industry, and infrastructure. They are currently agitated by China's construction of the Gormo-Lhasa rail line, a spectacularly ambitious project that will allow trains to run from the heart of China into Tibet. Apparently such things are a threat to Tibetans' way of life, which—in the eyes of comfortable Westerners and the daughters of rich bankers—is honorably simple and rustic, and must be kept so.

At the same time, Western campaigners' unquestioning support for the Dalai Lama suggests they see Tibetans as an immature people who need a godlike figure to lead them. The Dalai Lama was never elected by anybody. Indeed, some perceptive writers argue that the idolization of the Dalai Lama, by both powerful Westerners and many Tibetans themselves, has impeded the development of democracy. In her book *The Tibetan Independence Movement*, Jane Ardley writes, "[It] is apparent that it is the Dalai Lama's role as ultimate spiritual authority that is holding back the political process of democratization. The assumption that he occupies the correct moral ground from a spiritual perspective means that any challenge to his political authority may be interpreted as anti-religious."

Far from assisting the emergence of freedom, Free Tibet activists want to preserve Tibet as a museum, to keep it as a land cut off from modernity. And far from bringing democracy to Tibet, the activists' slavish worship of the Dalai Lama has helped to stifle, as Ardley further writes, "the opportunity for opposition and expression of different views," the very lifeblood of the democratic way.

Tibet has long been the plaything of people disillusioned with the modern world. Since James Hilton wrote *Lost Horizon* in 1933, in which Tibet was depicted as "Shangri-la," it has been used and abused, turned into an idealized land of goodness and purity by aristocratic and artistic elements in the West who despise the pace of change over here and like the idea of a natural, politics-free land "over there." In his 1991 book *Sacred Tibet*, Philip Rawson wrote, "Tibetan culture offers powerful, untarnished and coherent alternatives to Western egotistical lifestyles, our short attention span, our gradually more pointless pursuit of material satisfactions."

The driving force behind Tibetophilia today is not political solidarity with the Tibetans and certainly not any positive argument for full democratic equality, but rather a sense of disgust with Western life. In Rawson's words, "the West perceives some lack within itself" and seeks to find fulfilment in the ostensibly preserved "pure East." Ironically, then, Free Tibet activism has a colonial bent to it: wealthy Westerners pursuing emotional occupation.

In this simple world, Tibet is always good and China is always bad. As Donald S. Lopez Jr. argues in *Prisoners of Shangri-La: Tibetan Buddhism and the West*, many Westerners talk of the Chinese in Tibet as "an undifferentiated mass of godless Communists overrunning a peaceful land devoted only to ethereal pursuits" and come to see Tibetans as "superhuman" and the Chinese as "subhuman." That demonization fits well with the agenda of many Western governments and media outlets. Hence the adoration heaped on Ms. Fairbrother and her friends, who can congratulate themselves. They are not just idiots. They are useful idiots. ■

Brendan O'Neill is editor of spiked (www.spiked-online.com).

Arts & Letters

FILM

[Katyn]

Stalin's Willing Executioners

By Steve Sailer

IT OFTEN SEEMS as if humanity's seven-decade struggle with Communism has disappeared down the memory hole. While Nazis in glistening black leather remain our culture's omnipresent exemplars of evil, Communists are apparently too dowdy to bother remembering.

A few filmmakers have begun to dissent, however. Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck's superb drama about the East German secret police, "The Lives of Others," won the 2006 Best Foreign Film Oscar and ran for a half-year in American art houses.

In Warsaw on Sept. 17, 2007, director Andrzej Wajda, recipient of a Lifetime Achievement Oscar, premiered "Katyn," his long-awaited epic about the 1940 Soviet decapitation of the Polish nation in which his cavalry officer father had perished. The 82-year-old cinema legend reminisced, "I can't really talk about him, except to say that he was my ideal and that he died at the age when I needed him the most." The mass murder's cover-up lasted a half-century in Soviet-run Poland: not until 1989 was Wajda free to inscribe the year of his father's death on his tombstone.

A blockbuster in Poland, "Katyn" earned a Best Foreign Film nomination here. It hasn't, though, found an American

distributor. Fortunately, you can buy the Polish DVD on eBay for \$25. (Look for "English subtitles" and "Region Zero.")

"Katyn" begins Sept. 17, 1939, as Polish civilians flee eastward over a bridge from the invading Germans—only to collide with countrymen running westward from the Soviets, who, following the Hitler-Stalin pact that August, were grabbing their share of Poland.

The overwhelmed Polish forces surrender to their fellow Slavs, who send most of the enlisted men home. When the wife of a captured captain locates him awaiting shipment east and begs him to escape with her, he responds, with that fatalistic sense of honor that is the outstanding feature of the Polish character, that his pledge binds him to his brother officers. "Katyn" follows the cavalry captain into a Soviet POW camp inside a defiled Orthodox church and tells of the women who longed for him to come home and of the postwar hoax.

Because all Polish college graduates were commissioned as reserve officers, the Communists found themselves in possession of Poland's natural leaders, the men who would not abide a Poland ruled by Soviet stooges. On March 5, 1940, Beria, boss of the NKVD secret police, sent Stalin a memo recommending extermination of the Polish POW's. The NKVD methodically shot 22,000 in the back of the head and dumped most of the bodies in trenches in the Katyn Forest.

In 1943, the German army stumbled upon the mass grave. In perhaps the ultimate example of the pot calling the kettle black, Goebbels launched a propaganda campaign over the atrocity. In turn, Stalin used the outrage expressed by the legitimate Polish government-in-exile in London to accuse them of collab-

orating with the Nazis, justifying him in imposing his own Polish puppet regime.

FDR and Churchill acquiesced in the Soviet claim that the Nazis had killed the Polish officers during their 1941 attack on Russia, making gravestones with a date of "1940" politically incorrect in Poland until the fall of the Berlin Wall.

The Germans were doing the same in their half of Poland: "Katyn" depicts the Nazis arresting 144 college professors, including the captain's father, at Krakow's Jagiellonian University—incidentally putting young Karol Wojtyla, the future pope, out on the street.

Echoing Solzhenitsyn, Wajda extols remembrance: "The best remedy for political and social problems is to show them and to speak truly about them." In contrast, the Kremlin shut down its Katyn investigation in 2005 without prosecuting any perpetrators. KGB alumnus Vladimir Putin classified as secret 116 volumes of findings.

"Katyn" is an effective, moving film comparable to "The Pianist," the celebrated 2002 Holocaust film by Wajda's old colleague Roman Polanski. Americans will find "Katyn" more comprehensible on DVD than if it had run in the theaters. Wajda perfected his craft under Communist censorship, so his storytelling is implicit—he assumes that his audience knows enough Polish history to fill in his gaps. Luckily, by pausing the DVD periodically to talk it over, we can sort out the large cast of rather similar-looking Poles and distinguish the slight differences in color of the Polish, Soviet, and German officers' greatcoats.

As Stalin noted, "A single death is a tragedy; a million deaths is a statistic." Thanks to "Katyn," the deaths of these 22,000 Poles aren't a statistic anymore. ■

The rating would be PG-13.

BOOKS

[*The Case Against Barack Obama: The Unlikely Rise and Unexamined Agenda of the Media's Favorite Candidate*, David Freddoso, Regnery, 298 pages]

[*McCain: The Myth of a Maverick*, Matt Welch, Palgrave Macmillan, 256 pages]

None of the Above

By W. James Antle III

READING THE MAINSTREAM press clippings of this year's presidential race can bring to mind an old Mary MacGregor song: "Torn between two lovers, feelin' like a fool/Lovin' both of you is breakin' all the rules."

For the better part of the last decade, allegedly cynical reporters have been going gaga for John McCain, who in 2000 half-jokingly described the press corps as his base. No politician in the post-Watergate era—and certainly no Republican—has been able to reduce seen-it-all-before members of the Fourth Estate to lovesick schoolgirls with such alacrity. Then came Barack Obama, who managed to create a Beatlemania-like craze in the media without even whispering such sweet nothings as "you little jerk," a favorite McCain term of endearment.

Having two major-party presidential contenders who are adored by the media has tamed reporters' usually savage instincts when it comes to campaign coverage. Most serious criticism of both candidates has been relegated to the fever swamps. McCain's star has dimmed a little because Obama is a fresher story and more in line with Washington journalists' liberal political leanings. The Democratic nominee continues to coast from the Illinois state senate all the way to the doorstep of the

White House with little serious scrutiny.

David Freddoso has attempted to rectify this oversight with *The Case Against Barack Obama*, a careful and almost comprehensive dissection of Obama's record and policy positions. Freddoso, a reporter who has worked for *National Review Online* and the *Evans-Novak Political Report*, avoids the pitfalls of other anti-Obama books. "Too many of those criticizing Obama," he writes, "have been content merely to slander him—to claim falsely that he refuses to salute the U.S. flag or was sworn into office on a Koran..." Freddoso criticizes the "intellectual laziness" of conservatives who hope that some blogger will discover a birth certificate revealing that Obama was born in Kenya and—poof!—the Democratic nominee will disappear. It is far more difficult to do the work of dismantling Obama's banal liberal platform and contrived media image.

It does not diminish Freddoso's accomplishment to say that *The Case Against Barack Obama* is a perfect companion to *Reason* editor Matt Welch's anti-McCain book, *McCain: The Myth of a Maverick*. While Freddoso's book contains more original research, both volumes make good use of material that has been previously reported but frequently ignored and never compiled. Together, they take Obama and McCain down from their media-built pedestals and prove that for all their rhetoric of "change" and "reform," and "outsider" status, both candidates are in fact unusually skilled practitioners of politics as usual. Both books also make clear that the two overexposed candidates have underexposed records—Welch dubs McCain "the unexamined candidate" and Freddoso's subtitle stresses Obama's "unexamined agenda."

According to the conventional wisdom, McCain is a selfless crusader against special interests—defined as any cause that does not interest McCain—while Obama is a healer who will unite blacks and whites, rich and poor, red states and blue states. The truth, our authors argue, is more complicated. In Freddoso's telling, Obama is a doctrinaire liberal and deeply partisan Demo-

crat who was able to get along smoothly in Chicago machine politics and with the racist paranoia of Jeremiah Wright's Trinity United Church—marking himself, *Chicago Tribune* columnist John Kass says, as the kind of politician who "won't make no waves and won't back no losers."

Welch similarly departs from the usual McCain narrative. The Arizona senator and Republican presidential nominee is "not a 'Man of the People,'" Welch writes. "He's third-generation Navy royalty, prepped in an elite boarding school, married (as his namesake father was before him) to an ambitious, moneyed millionairess of refined taste and regal bearing." Nothing wrong with any of that, except for the inconvenient truth that McCain's career hardly represents the banishment of money from politics. Welch describes McCain's support for campaign finance reform as the "equivalent of an alcoholic using the federal government to lock up his own liquor cabinet."

Neither Obama nor McCain are consistently high-minded in their political practices. Freddoso recounts how Obama won his Illinois state senate seat in 1996 by getting his Democratic primary opponents kicked off the ballot, an example of how many election laws actually restrict democracy. Welch reports that McCain had to be shamed into sharing the proceeds of a "salute to Barry Goldwater" with the Arizona Republican Party. McCain had originally intended for the event to be a fundraiser for his 1992 Senate re-election campaign, but agreed to give half the money to the state GOP when Goldwater objected. Some time later, Goldwater sent his Senate successor a follow-up letter. "You will recall, during my speech at the dinner for the President in Phoenix, I announced that you were going to give half of the funds you raised to the state Republican Party," he wrote. "I am told by the Party, that you still owe them \$35,000, and unless you pay all of it, or most of it, they cannot meet their payroll next Wednesday."

The putatively reform-minded Obama

is at best an inconsistent foe of wasteful government spending. Freddoso points out that Obama supports ethanol subsidies, “a rare policy on which you’ll find *National Review’s* editors agreeing with Paul Krugman, the liberal columnist at the *New York Times*,” in opposing the subsidy. In 2007, he secured a \$1 million earmark for the University of Chicago Medical Center, where his wife served as vice president and “received a pay raise of nearly \$200,000 at just the time when Obama became a senator.” Obama has also suggested that he would not have supported welfare reform.

If none of this sounds like what you have read in the newspaper or heard on television, neither Freddoso nor Welch would be surprised. “Our press normally fixes a critical eye on ambitious politicians who promise us the world,” writes Freddoso. “That eye just seems to well up with tears whenever it falls upon the junior senator from Illinois.” Welch asks, “Who can deny the charm of a powerful man willing to poke fun at himself? Certainly not the national press corps, who were swooning to McCain’s flattering attentions and good-time flyboy humor even before he was taken prisoner in Hanoi.”

While partisans focus on the supposedly seismic gap that would separate an Obama presidency from McCain’s, reading Freddoso and Welch together makes clear that the two presidential candidates have plenty in common. Both candidates see “cynicism” as the problem, with government as the all-purpose solution. McCain’s national-greatness conservatism is the flip side of Obama’s messianic liberalism. They are the ones we have been waiting for, from Des Moines to Darfur.

Obama and McCain agree on expanded taxpayer-funded embryonic stem-cell research, campaign-finance reform, a costly cap-and-trade approach to reducing emissions, amnesty for illegal immigrants, and maintaining the current high levels of legal immigration. Until McCain flipped before his second presidential bid, they both opposed the Bush tax cuts. They agree, with some nuances, on affirmative action and bilingual educa-

tion. They agree on an interventionist foreign policy, though they would intervene in different places. They agree on effectively imposing pharmaceutical price controls through Medicare (McCain’s otherwise honorable vote against the prescription-drug benefit was largely motivated by this concern.) Even on issues where they disagree, like gun control, they are not always as far apart as advertised—Obama received an F from the National Rifle Association, McCain a C.

Which brings us to another reason Freddoso and Welch’s books go together like red meat and red wine: the case against Barack Obama is the strongest case for John McCain; the case against John McCain is the strongest conservative argument—Obamacare special pleading aside—for Obama.

Freddoso documents that Obama is probably the most pro-abortion presidential candidate in history. He worked to block a bill—virtually identical to the federal law he now claims to support—in the Illinois legislature that would have made it illegal to kill or deny care to children born alive in failed abortion procedures. He beat Hillary Clinton to the NARAL Pro-Choice America endorsement in the Democratic primaries. Obama has vowed to sign the Freedom of Choice Act, of which he is a Senate co-sponsor. This legislation, which supporters say will codify *Roe v. Wade*, would nullify every official abortion restriction in the country. And Obama supports taxpayer-funded abortion, even though the Hyde Amendment has done more to reduce abortions than any other pro-life policy.

As president, Obama would repeal Reagan’s reforms by pushing marginal tax rates and regulation of the economy back to levels unseen since the 1970s. The nonpartisan National Taxpayers Union has calculated that his campaign promises would increase federal spending by more than \$300 billion a year, an amount that cannot be paid for by simply letting the Bush tax cuts expire or even withdrawing from Iraq. “There is no problem in America that Barack Obama cannot solve with a tax increase,” writes Freddoso.

Freddoso’s chapter on Obama’s foreign policy is a fairly conventional critique of the Democratic nominee’s inexperience and inconsistency, with additional material on liberal fecklessness during the Cold War. That’s fine as far as it goes, but it would have been more interesting if Freddoso—an Iraq War skeptic and Ron Paul voter who never criticizes Obama for his decision to oppose the war—had explored his subject’s interventionism. Obama may emphasize diplomacy, but he doesn’t seem to mind adding to our military commitments, from humanitarian excursions in Africa to a new surge in Afghanistan.

Welch’s portrait of McCain is no more flattering. As president, the Republican nominee would maintain the U.S. presence in Iraq, escalate the conflict with Iran, expand NATO until we risk war with a nuclear-armed Russia, and engage in numerous humanitarian interventions. He has lamented the failure to send troops to Rwanda and Darfur, and he also favors a more forceful approach to North Korea.

Domestically, McCain’s support for limited government doesn’t extend far beyond tearing down Bridges to Nowhere. As with foreign policy, his first instinct is always intervention. McCain, Welch writes, has called for “expanding Medicare, cracking down on Hollywood marketers, even banning ultimate fighting on Indian reservations.” He wants to regulate everything from political speech to professional boxing. “National pride will not survive the people’s contempt for government,” he wrote in *Worth the Fighting For*. “And national pride should be as indispensable to the happiness of Americans as is our self-respect.”

Neither book is an unrelenting hatchet job. Welch doesn’t hold back in discussing McCain’s personal heroism, and Freddoso gives Obama points for thoughtfulness and talent as a writer. But taken together, they don’t inspire much confidence in the next commander in chief. Spend time and read them—perhaps on Election Day. ■

W. James Antle III is associate editor of *The American Spectator*.

[*Political Hypocrisy: The Mask of Power, From Hobbes to Orwell and Beyond*, David Runciman, Princeton University Press, 286 pages]

The Age of Hypocrisy

By Peter Osborne

UNLIKE SOME POLITICAL scientists, David Runciman does not treat the study of political theory as an arcane discipline understood only by experts. He writes for the educated public and manfully endeavors to engage with contemporary debate. This is commendable.

So is the thesis of this book. It is admirably stark, and uncomfortably counterintuitive. Runciman makes the case for political hypocrisy. He sets about this unpromising task by arguing that democracy itself is a charade, based on falsehood and deceit. This means that it is at best self-defeating to expose the numerous hypocrisies of contemporary public life.

"Hypocrisy and anti-hypocrisy are joined together," asserts Runciman, "to form a discrete system, so that it is never a question of truth versus lies; it is, at best, a choice between different kinds of truth against different kinds of lies."

This state of affairs, claims Runciman, means that those who expose hypocrisy are themselves hypocrites. The sooner we acknowledge this, he adds, the better. He therefore thinks that the way to deal with hypocrisy is not to expose it. It is better to distinguish between those types of hypocrisy that do damage and those types that oil the wheels of the system.

Not surprisingly, Runciman's hypothesis has proved mightily popular among the political class. Before setting off on his summer holidays this year, the British Conservative Party leader David Cameron, now universally seen as the next prime minister, reportedly issued a reading list to his Members of Parliament that included Runciman's study.

Some of this acclaim is deserved. Runciman makes useful points. He is correct to note that there is a strong element of theater in public encounters, which means that all politicians are playing roles and therefore seeking to deceive the voters in some way or another.

Nor is this posturing, Runciman notes, confined to government ministers. He produces a tremendous quote from the Victorian novelist Anthony Trollope: "It is the trade of the opponent to attack, it is the trade of the newspaper to be indignant, it is the trade of the minister to defend; and the world looks on believing none of them."

Runciman reasonably points out that George Orwell, the famously clear-sighted destroyer of falsehood, is at his least convincing when projecting his own alternative, based on a misty vision of decency and the ordinary working man, to the hypocritical British ruling class. My own book, *The Rise of Political Lying*, which exposes dishonesty and suggests a return to public probity, gets flayed as "absurd."

Unfortunately, Runciman's work suffers from a number of serious structural flaws that prevent it from being either convincing or genuinely important. One is the author's apparently willful failure to define what he means by hypocrisy. At times, Runciman uses the term in its accepted modern sense of double standards, as in "one rule for them and one for the rest of us." Elsewhere, however, he uses it synonymously with all manner of betrayal, deception, fraud, chicanery, and other errant behavior.

Here is a small example of this sloppy approach: at one stage, he disclaims full knowledge of Orwell's work, saying that it would be "hypocritical of me to claim that I have read everything [by Orwell]." But this is bad logic. It would certainly be dishonest of Runciman to claim a thoroughgoing knowledge of Orwell. But it would only be hypocritical for Runciman to make such an assertion if he were an advocate of public honesty, and he goes out of his way in this book to make clear that he is nothing of the

sort. The real subject of Runciman's book is political deception, not hypocrisy, and it would have been better if he had come out and said so straight.

This confusion is made worse by Runciman's methodology. He rarely tries to construct a proper, rigorous argument. Instead, he explores the problem of political hypocrisy through an exposition of the views of philosophers, politicians, novelists, and other writers, mainly chosen (so far as I could tell) at random. Worse still, this analysis is chronological rather than thematic. Runciman's own views tend to emerge in sly asides rather than through tough and openly argued analysis.

This technique means that, just as he never defines hypocrisy, he never addresses in a coherent way the very serious objections to the use of hypocrisy in all kinds of public life. Runciman certainly acknowledges at the start of his book that "there is something repulsive about hypocrisy encountered at first hand, since no one enjoys being taken for a fool." But the real problem with hypocrisy is much more profound than mere vanity—Runciman never even mentions the crucial argument that deception can never be compatible with democratic politics because deception means that voters are denied the ability to reach informed decisions.

Exactly the same is true of human relationships: they cannot be sustained on a basis of equality if one partner deceives the other. The philosopher Immanuel Kant made this point very elegantly. He argued that human beings possessed an intrinsic moral worth, which was based on the ability to make moral choices. For Kant—who nowhere gets a citation in the book or even in the 14 pages of bibliography at the back—deception and lying are terribly destructive of our basic humanity because they take away our ability to evaluate these choices on the basis of true information. To give one vital contemporary example: the decision to invade Iraq commanded the assent of voters in the United States and Britain partly because politicians informed us that Saddam

Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction and was therefore a threat to the world. We were denied the opportunity to make a properly informed choice and therefore in Kantian terms stripped of our humanity.

It is a grave weakness of Runciman's work that nowhere does he even attempt to confront this argument. This directly leads to the book's second and even more astonishing lacuna: it contains no discussion of the contemporary crisis in political trust. Yet there is an important body of political research that directly connects the type of hypocrisy treated by Runciman as a benign part of the political process to the collapse in voter turnout in advanced democracies. For example, Professor Colin Crouch's incomparable recent pamphlet, "Coping with Post Democracy," shows how the double standards, cheating, and chicanery of a narrow political caste have alienated ordinary voters. Crouch proves, first,

not, Hillary Clinton, the cynical and destructive candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination, is the nearest thing Runciman's book has to a modern hero.

Runciman, a product of Britain's social and educational elite, uses the sneering language of the English upper-middle-class drawing room to express disapproval. One of his favorite words is "ghastly." Tory jingoism is "ghastly," and so is the "posturing of party politics." Nor—like many of his caste—does he care for modern democracy. For him it is nothing more than a "useful fiction," which means that hypocrisy is the only solution: one set of standards for members of the ruling elite and another for the rest of us.

This argument is worse than distasteful—it's wrong. Of course Runciman is right to say that hypocrisy, with all the deceptions it involves, is inevitable in political life. This is because it is part of the human condition to be unable to live

[*A History of Political Trials: From Charles I to Saddam Hussein, John Laughland, Peter Lang, 315 pages*]

Trial by Error

By Christopher Howse

IN 300 YEARS OF TRIALS of former sovereigns, not one has ever been acquitted. This striking observation lies at the heart of John Laughland's well-argued and beautifully written survey of political trials. He does not mean prosecutions brought by political opponents to eliminate their rivals but trials of those who hold power for true acts of state.

The first trial that the author examines is that of King Charles I of England, which serves as a surprisingly well-fitting pattern for subsequent political trials, including those at Nuremberg after the Second World War and that of Slobodan Milosevic, the president of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

King Charles was still king when he was tried in January 1649. Oliver Cromwell, the leader of the republican Roundhead faction in the English Civil wars of the 1640s, declared, "We will cut off his head with the crown on it." This logically presented the court with a difficulty when the king's first move, as he stood in the great medieval oak-beamed Westminster Hall, was to say to his accusers: "I would know by what power I am called hither ... by what Authority—I mean lawful. There are many unlawful Authorities in this world: Thieves and Robbers by the highways."

The 80 commissioners empaneled to sit in judgment on the king were pre-selected from among his enemies, soldiers or supporters of the revolutionary New Model Army. Charles's trial was to be the founding act of the new regime, and, Laughland argues, the very prototype for revolutionary trials in the future.

Laughland explodes several myths about the trial. It was not a test of some arbitrary "divine right of kings." The

THE LANGUAGE OF DEMOCRATIC DEBATE HAS BEEN CAPTURED IN RECENT DECADES BY EXPERTS FROM THE ADVERTISING AND MARKETING INDUSTRIES.

that deception is by no means as inevitable in a democracy as Runciman continually (though with no evidence) asserts. Second, he shows that the language of democratic debate has been captured in recent decades by experts from the advertising and marketing industries, who have brought the arts of mass manipulation to an entirely new level.

Runciman's static method of analysis is incapable of dealing with these urgent and dynamic contemporary arguments. A relatively young man, this highly trained Cambridge don lacks a historical perspective. This has led him to the error of assuming that the corrupt and disingenuous techniques that have dominated American political discourse since the emergence of the Clintons two decades ago are an inevitable corollary of the democratic process in all times and all places. Believe it or

up to our ideals. But there is a world of difference between acknowledging that human beings are fallible and asserting—as Runciman does—that we should not expect politicians to make a serious effort to behave in a reputable and straightforward manner.

That is what makes this book such a disappointment. Runciman is potentially one of the ablest and best of political philosophers. His attempt to bring ethical theories to bear on the perplexity of public decision-making should have been worthwhile, decent, and significant. Instead, he's chosen to become an apologist for the unscrupulous and self-serving political elite. ■

Peter Osborne is a columnist for the Daily Mail. His most recent book, The Triumph of the Political Class, will be published in paperback by Simon and Schuster in November.

king declared, "It is the liberty of the people of England I stand for." His argument rested on law. "If Power without Law may make Laws, may alter the fundamental Laws of the kingdom, I do not know what subject he is in England that can be sure of his life."

Another misapprehension about Charles's trial that Laughland counters is the modern idea that his execution marked the beginning of secular liberalism. "The soldiers' motivation for trying the king was explicitly theological," he observes. "It was inspired by religious fundamentalism." The decision to bring the king to trial had been decided at a prayer meeting for senior army officers at Windsor Castle on April 29, 1648. The army saw the outbreak of the Second Civil War that year as divine retribution for their sins, and they sought to "find out, and so remove, the cause of such sad rebukes, as they were upon us by reason of our iniquities." The sin they discovered was their having attempted to negotiate a peace agreement with the king. So they resolved, "if ever the Lord brought us back again in peace, to call Charles Stewart, that man of blood, to an account for that blood he had shed."

Laughland invokes here the French philosopher René Girard's ideas about a community purchasing unity by projecting evils (often its own evils) on to a victim, often an outsider—a foreigner, cripple, witch, or king. This indeed does seem to be an anthropological feature of political trials of national leaders—Louis XVI, Marshal Pétain, Saddam Hussein, and others. Yet it is not equally clear that the republican army's action against King Charles was seen by them as "expiation before God through an act of sacrifice," as Laughland suggests. It is true that the Puritans took to heart the biblical text from the Book of Numbers: "The land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it." That, however, was not seen as a sacrifice, since, as Laughland recognizes, the inheritance of Christianity identified the pre-eminent sacrificial victim as Jesus Christ, an innocent, not a guilty victim.

(Charles indeed identified himself with the Son of God, and accounts of his trial did not neglect to record parallel details with the Passion of Christ, such as the spittle silently borne.)

If the trial and execution of King Charles I were necessary to justify a new regime and to avenge innocent (Puritan) blood, then what more justification did Bradshaw and his fellow regicides need? Yet Bradshaw did bring in another element: natural law. During a long peroration, he got into something of a tangle, saying to the king: "Sir, as the law is your superior, so truly, sir, there is something that is superior to the law and that is indeed the parent or author of the law." Here one might have expected him to refer to God. In pre-modern times, Laughland notes, the sovereign, himself above civil law, "had a particularly heavy and almost sacred duty to perform—that of upholding the basic social contract, the natural law and God's commands." Yet Bradshaw instead identified the author of the law with "the people of England."

The godless Jacobins, 143 years later, also appealed to natural law when Louis XVI was put on trial after the French Revolution. This was the law under which the deposed king should be judged if there was no positive (state) law to try him by, they claimed. By that argument, the king's defense counsel countered, natural law guaranteed Louis the same rights as any other citizen, including that of a fair trial. As it was, Louis was tried not for crimes he had committed after his abdication but for acts allegedly committed while he was still king. In that case, it should have been recognized that when sovereign he had the same inviolability as that now accorded the deputies of the National Convention. If Louis were denied the rule of law, the people could in due course also deny the rule of law to his judges. Laughland points out that subsequent events were to prove this prediction horribly right.

In another chapter, Laughland acknowledges that appeals were also made to natural law in the Nuremberg

Missing Any Issues of The American Conservative?

Order today, and get a FREE copy of the first issue!

\$6 per issue postage paid.

Please indicate quantity:

October 7, 2002

FREE Vol. 1, No. 1

First Issue!

FREE with any paid order



December 2, 2002

___ Norman Mailer on Empire

May 19, 2003

___ Whose War?



November 20, 2006

___ Who Killed Conservatism?

June 18, 2007

___ The Ron Paul Moment



July 16, 2007

___ A Righter Shade of Green

February 11, 2008

___ Invade the World, Invite the World

See "Archive" at www.amconmag.com for a description of all issues

___ Other issue. Date _____

___ Other issue. Date _____

☐ **All 24 issues published in 2005**

☐ **All 24 issues published in 2006**

☐ **All 24 issues published in 2007**

FREE Vol. 1, No. 1 with paid order

Name _____

Please print

Address _____

City _____

State _____

Zip _____

TAC80908

Send your order with payment to:

The American Conservative
1300 Wilson Blvd., Suite 120
Arlington, VA 22209

trials of Nazi leaders after the Second World War. He admits that Nuremberg applied the concept of crimes against humanity for the first time. But he insists that where Nuremberg really broke new ground was in bringing prosecutions against individuals for crimes against peace. "When Robert Jackson [the chief U.S. prosecutor] rose to his feet to open the prosecution, therefore, he did not say that Nuremberg was the first trial for crimes against humanity. He said that it was 'the first trial in history for crimes against the peace of the world.'" The crime, Jackson said, "which comprehends all lesser crimes is the crime of making unjustifiable war."

Laughland asserts, perhaps a little anxiously, that, "one can certainly believe that the Nazi leaders broadly got what they morally deserved, while at the same time insisting that the Nuremberg trials were legally problematic." There is, of course, a big difference between

prosecuting war crimes—well established in national statute books and in international treaty law—and an attempted prosecution of a former regime for going to war, especially when the prosecution is brought by a successor regime anxious to legitimize its own standing by retroactive imposition of new laws.

When prosecutions are brought by international tribunals—such as the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, created in 1993, or the International Criminal Court, created in 2002—then Laughland sees political acts hiding behind judicial forms, with human rights activists in charge of a new world order. Slobodan Milosevic, the president of Yugoslavia, was indicted by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia at the height of the bombing of Yugoslavia by NATO.

"NATO cannot see that its bombs on Yugoslavia were themselves an act of violence, because it believes that they were being dropped only to prevent violence," Laughland declares. There is a twin track: international policing and international judgment. Global jurisdiction is claimed, as when, "in February 2007, the International Criminal Court issued an indictment against a Sudanese minister even though Sudan is not a signatory of the ICC treaty." Since *A History of Political Trials* was published, the ICC prosecutor has called for the arrest of the current president of Sudan himself.

John Laughland's marshalling of facts can be uncomfortable, as when he highlights some of the absurdities in the trial of Slobodan Milosevic, and his bigger argument challenges bien-pensant assumptions about international intervention in the acts of sovereign countries. His extended essay hammers home a nagging suspicion that there are new forces at work, arrogating to themselves sovereignty over rulers and states that had assumed their own sovereignty was inviolable. ■

Christopher Howse is an assistant editor of The Daily Telegraph.

Belarus

Continued from page 16

smart young woman I found was embarrassingly keen on her country, comparatively prosperous, orderly and happy, and quite undisturbed by the levels of surveillance and the absence of political choice. I am increasingly convinced that she must have somehow been planted on me, but I simply cannot work out how. What, though, if she was genuine?

The strongest impression here is of having slightly sidestepped normal time. Belarus, thanks to the constitutional accident that granted it independence, managed to avoid the dreadful mafia years of Boris Yeltsin. By re-selling cheap gas and oil from Russia at a generous profit—an arrangement that will soon end—it has paid for an old-fashioned subsidized economy and offers a sort of refuge from the frantic globalism that has swallowed everywhere else from the Atlantic to the Urals. Normal people, living real lives, can support or tolerate extremely nasty regimes.

Do not sneer too much at those who do this. Not everyone can be protected by oceans and friendly neighbors from the ancient, abiding horrors of human strife. Those who are not so safe are keener on security than on liberty. Nor can we in the free world, who have lazily and thoughtlessly been cajoled into giving away so much of our own liberty since Sept. 11, 2001, look down on others who never had much liberty to give—especially in light of the near-suicidal bravery of those who dare to oppose Alexander Lukashenko.

As I recently discussed my years in the Evil Empire with an old friend who had been there at the same time, trying to make some sort of sense of it amid all that has happened since, she concluded that it was and continued to be both very confusing and often rather touching. So it remains. ■

Peter Hitchens is a columnist for the Mail on Sunday.

MOVING?

Changing your address?

Simply go to **The American Conservative** website, www.amconmag.com
Click "subscribe" and then click "address change."

To access your account make sure you have your TAC mailing label. You may also subscribe or renew online.

If you prefer to mail your address change send your TAC label with your new address to:

The American Conservative
Subscription Department
P.O. Box 9030
Maple Shade, NJ 08052-9030

Day by the Pool

My poolside reading in Tuscany this summer was not *Life With My Sister Madonna* or *Obama Nation* or even Andrew Bacevich's *The Limits of Power* (though

I packed it), but, alliteratively, *The Duty of Delight: The Diaries of Dorothy Day*.

The pool, incidentally, was lovely. It overlooked Arezzo, and, since the *agriturismo* where we were staying is used mainly by Germans, it was clean, orderly, and the filters worked. Even the kids were courteous: when I slid into the pool, they stopped horsing around and moved to one side, delicately averting their eyes.

It wasn't Dorothy Day country, that's for sure. The Lower East Side is Dorothy Day country. That is where, in 1933, she and Peter Maurin launched the *Catholic Worker*; a monthly newspaper still going strong and still selling for a penny a copy.

A paper wasn't enough, however. Dorothy dedicated herself to the care of the poor and dispossessed. As a pacifist and anarchist, moreover, she campaigned ceaselessly against "Holy Mother State" and did time in jail for civil disobedience. By the time she died in 1980, at age 83, she was loved by political romantics of all stripes, not least conservatives. Rome is now considering her cause, and she may be made a saint.

Those of you who are familiar with guilt will know what I mean when I say that I felt some conflict between my supine hedonism in Arezzo and Dorothy's life of self-denial and monastic discipline.

One afternoon, a bit spooked by Dorothy's asceticism, I turned to my wife and asked whether it was a sin to sunbathe. "Of course not," she said. "What about wearing lipstick, then?" I

asked her. She rolled her eyes. "You know what your trouble is? You are a Calvinist."

Dorothy Day might have rolled her eyes, too, but then again, she might not. She had a keen, though forgiving, eye for the absurd. On Dec. 28, 1953, the Feast of the Holy Innocents, she noted, "Fr. Elias showed up quite the worse for wear after a wet Christmas in town. ... During the newspaper strike last month [he] came in before breakfast announcing that Churchill was dead—a way to distract our attention from his condition." The crazy cunning of the drunk, eh? As even young readers will know, Churchill was not remotely dead in 1953. He died in 1965.

Dorothy tried not to judge the people who sought shelter in the Catholic Worker houses of hospitality. She shared their life, down to the bedbugs and the lice. On top of that she went to Mass daily and said the divine office, wrote continually (and very well), and gave lectures all over the country.

Sometimes she listened to opera on the radio or watched a ball game on television. Once she went to "My Fair Lady." But otherwise there was hardly a moment's peace. If it wasn't one thing it was another. Sept. 8, 1967: "Placid went wild last night, screaming fire thru the house, trying to throw Jackie off the roof 'to save her,' and running screaming through the home. He finally jumped off the roof of the library room, Margie ... said he ran to her saying he was burning in hell. They had to call the state Troopers..."

Dorothy did not much care for calling the cops, however, perhaps seeing such involvement as a compromise with Caesar, with Mammon, with the capitalism and welfarism she loathed. Her father described her as the "nut of the family."

As a young woman she had been a Marxist, a Greenwich Village boho and boozier. She was once married for a year and had a child by another man. She also had an abortion. In 1927, she became a Catholic. "I wanted to be poor, obedient and chaste," she later recalled. She was not someone who'd been born holy. She was one of us, but courageous, principled, and smart.

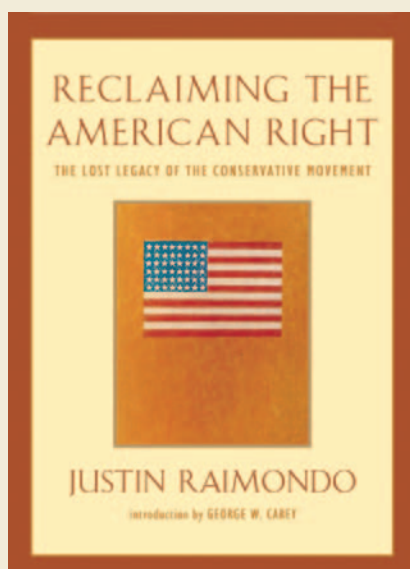
Her spiritual example—her life of love—is humbling. Her political example makes me appalled to reflect that I was once a movement conservative and regarded Charles Krauthammer as a deep thinker. Just occasionally, though, the old me resurfaces when I read these diaries and my knee begins to jerk. Dorothy certainly cut Castro too much slack, and her hostility to the Vietnam War was at times just a tad self-righteous.

Yet she was never a patsy for the counterculture. On the contrary. An entry from June 23, 1967: "I felt in view of the blood and guts spilled in Vietnam the soldiers would like to come back and kill these flower-power-loving people. ... Middle-class affluent homes, they have not known suffering."

What a great American Dorothy Day was, how brave, how free, how honest. Here is an entry from March 15, 1951: "This afternoon, glimpses of my own ugliness, vanity, pride, cruelty, contempt of others, levity, jeering, carping. Too sensitive to criticism, showing self-seeking love."

Story of my life. St. Dorothy, pray for us. ■

HOW DID WE GET HERE?



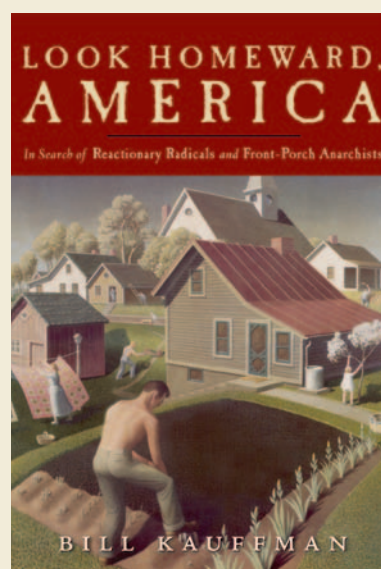
RECLAIMING THE AMERICAN RIGHT:

The Lost Legacy of the
Conservative Movement

By Justin Raimondo • 375 pages • \$18 paper

With a new introduction by George W. Carey and critical essays by Scott P. Richert and David Gordon, this is the definitive history of the Old Right, the book that inspired Ron Paul to run for the presidency.

“Richly researched, brilliantly written, passionately argued. . . . A veritable *Iliad* of the American Right.”
—Patrick J. Buchanan



LOOK HOMEWARD, AMERICA:

In Search of Reactionary Radicals and
Front-Porch Anarchists

By Bill Kauffman • 230 pages • \$25 cloth

“In this celebration of what Kauffman calls America’s ‘traditionalist rebels,’ passages of considerable eloquence are all the more arresting precisely because they appear in a work otherwise characterized by such unrestrained jollity.”

— Alan Pell Crawford

“The American pageant includes a huge supporting cast of idealists, eccentrics, crackpots, and cranks. Telling their stories can only enrich the texture of the tale.”

— *Philadelphia Inquirer*



THE IMPRINT OF THE INTERCOLLEGIATE STUDIES INSTITUTE

AVAILABLE AT FINE BOOK STORES. *U.S. & Canadian orders: call (800) 621-2736.*
Order online at: www.isibooks.org. Contact ISI Books: sales@isibooks.org.